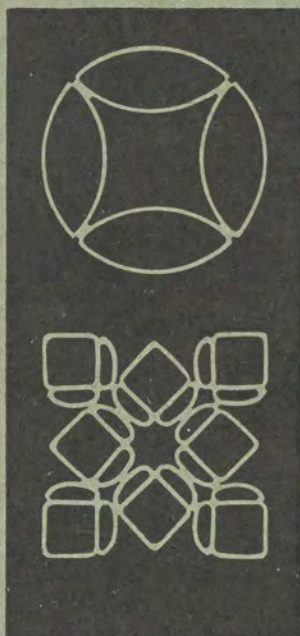


# UNIT JEWELLERY

## A HANDBOOK IN SIX PARTS

BY R. LL. B. RATHBONE

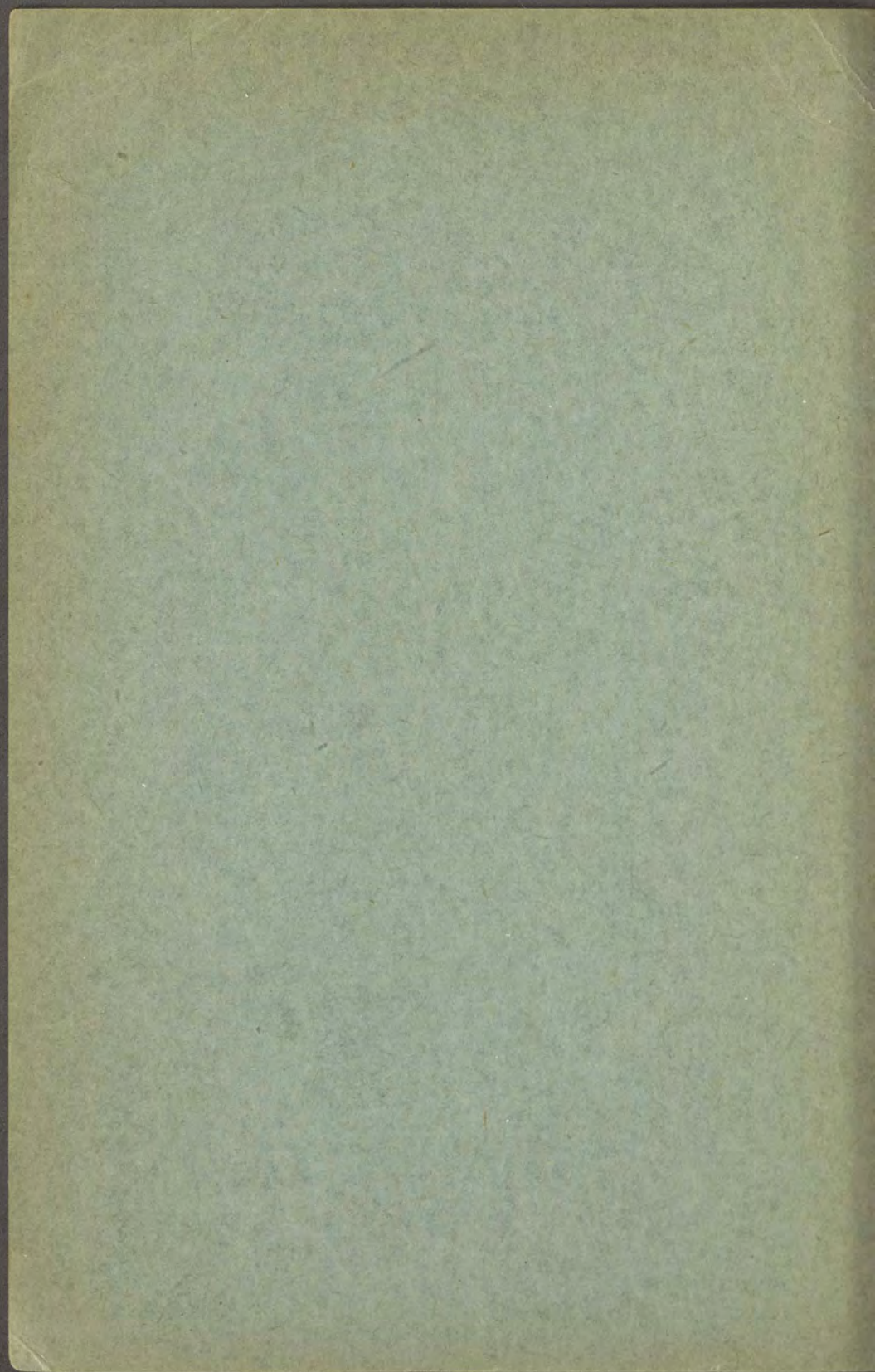
VERY FULLY  
ILLUSTRATED  
THROUGHOUT



EACH PART  
MAY BE HAD  
SEPARATELY

CRAFTSMANSHIP  
WITHOUT DESIGN  
IS LIKE A VESSEL  
HAVING NO PILOT

PART  
V



UNIT JEWELLERY

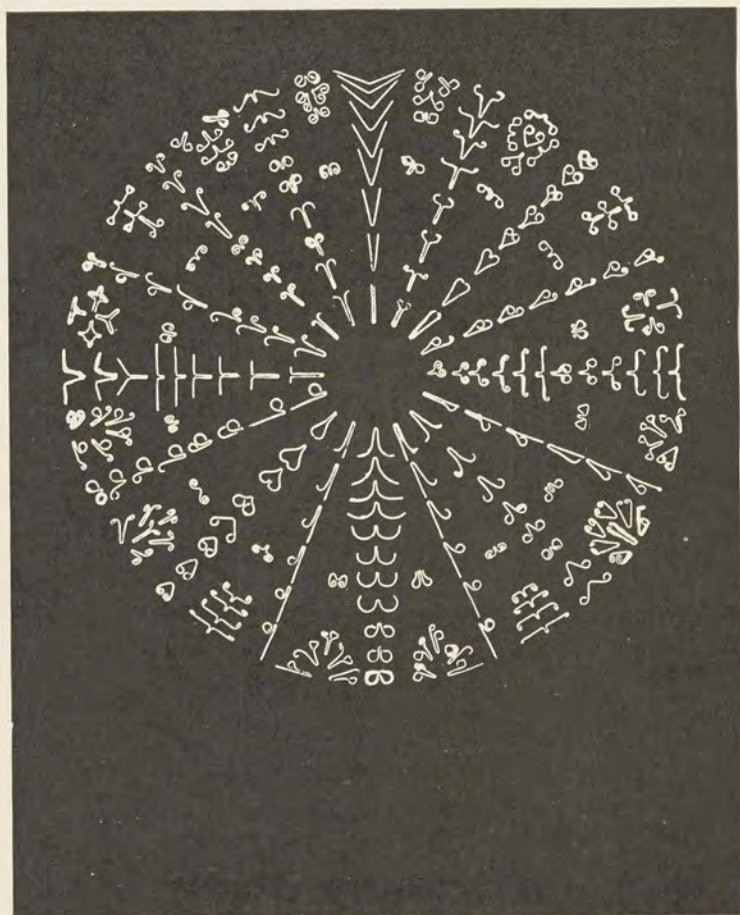


FIG. 14c.—Units of the " V " type.

# UNIT JEWELLERY

A HANDBOOK FOR CRAFTSMEN  
IN SIX PARTS (SOLD SEPARATELY)  
ILLUSTRATED WITH MANY  
DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR  
AND WITH A PROFUSION OF  
PHOTOGRAPHIC SILHOUETTES  
OF ORNAMENTS AND DETAILS  
MADE BY HIM FOR THAT PURPOSE  
AS ALSO WITH PHOTOGRAPHS OF  
TOOLS AND OF SOME EXAMPLES  
OF JEWELLERY SELECTED FROM  
NATIONAL & PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

BY R. L. L. B. RATHBONE

PART V

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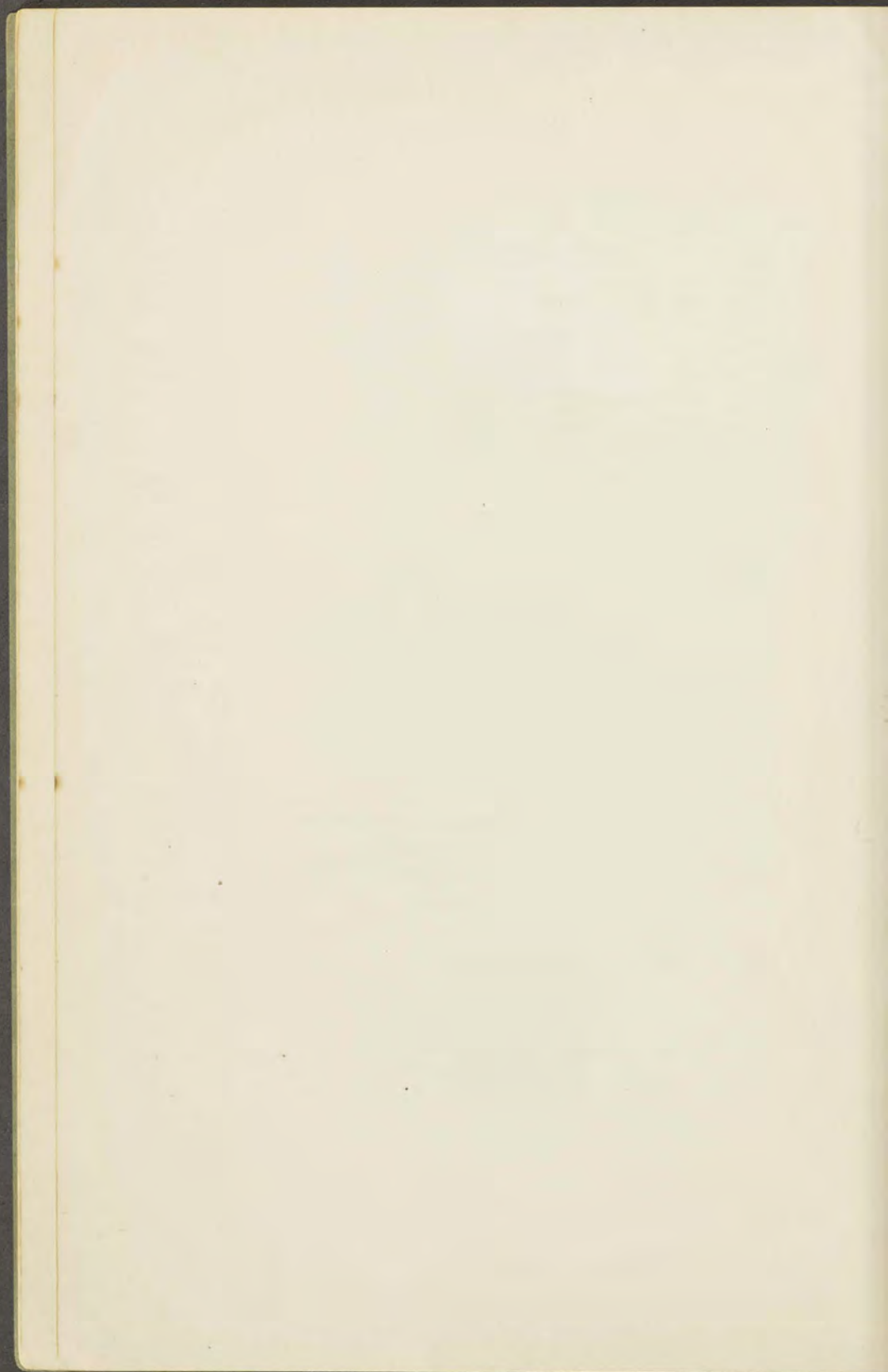
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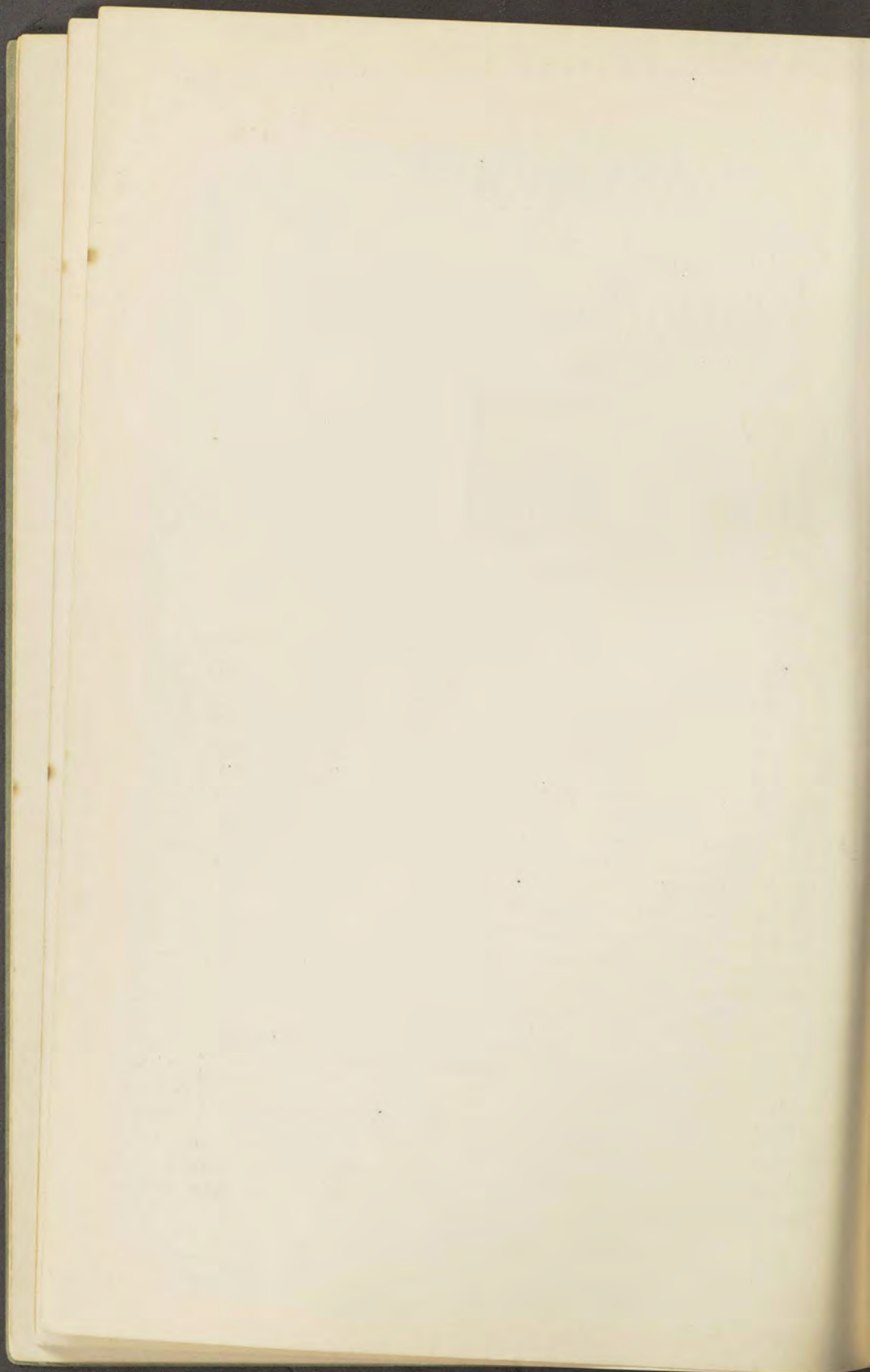


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## CHAPTER XLIX

### COMPOUND TWISTS AND PLAITS



THE infinite number of possible varieties in twists is incidentally demonstrated by the fact that it is often quite astonishingly difficult to repeat a compound twist accurately, unless the most careful and detailed notes have been made, not only of the exact sizes of all the component

parts, but also of the precise degree of twisting which is used in each one of them individually, and in the group collectively; that is to say, of the number of turns that are taken to form a twist of any given length.

It is also equally necessary also to make careful notes of the precise order in which the different stages of the twisting processes are performed so as to be sure of reproducing a particular desired effect.

It may easily happen, for example, that one constituent member of a compound twist may be so much changed in appearance as a result of subsequent twisting of all the constituent parts together, that finally there is little or nothing to show what the member in question looked like when it was first put into its place.

Very slight changes in the relative sizes of the various component wires will often entirely alter the proportions of the resulting twist, and if these differences are carried only a little further, perhaps the proportions may even be reversed, so that the part which ought to have been the most important will be found to have retired into insignificance. Then, again, it makes all the difference how far a twist is taken—sometimes a close twist is required, while at others

an open one looks much better—and it may be quite difficult to believe that two different examples are really composed of an equal number of wires of the same size, the only variation being in the degree of twisting (see Fig. 99, p. 242).

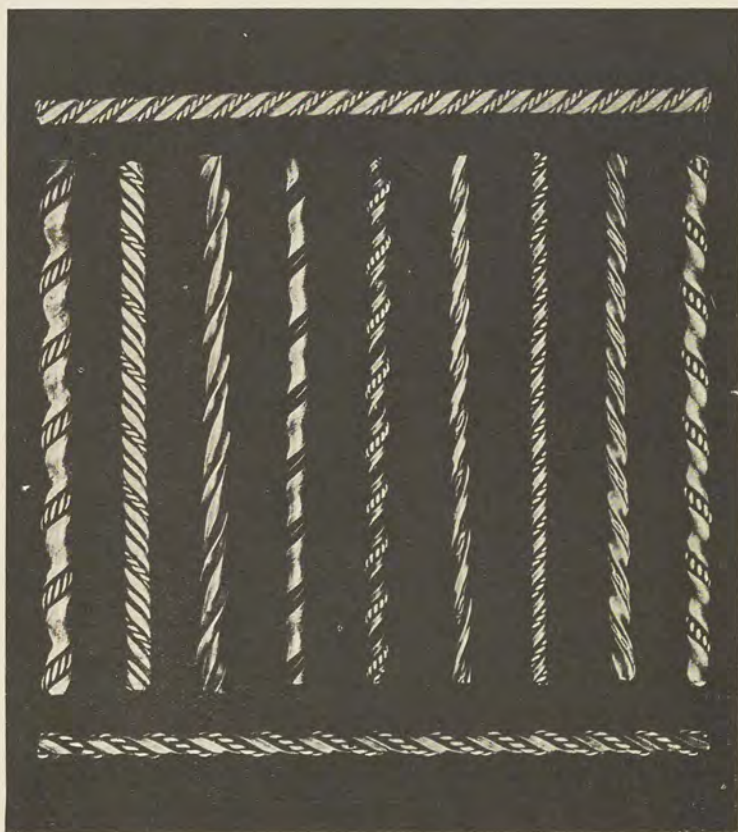


FIG. 104.—Compound twists.

In this connection there are two characteristics which are common to all twists, and it is desirable to realise how these may be varied.

These two characteristics may be conveniently described as “pitch” and “degree of compactness.”

The pitch of a twist decides whether the spiral lines which

express the twisting shall appear long or short, steep or the reverse; while the degree of compactness decides whether the turns shall be in close contact one with another, or whether they shall be separated by wider spaces.

It must be admitted that the terms "pitch" and "degree of compactness" are not entirely satisfactory, because the interpretation of the expression "steepness of pitch" would naturally vary in significance according to whether the twist which is referred to happened to be in a vertical or in a horizontal position in relation to the eyes of the observer.

Consequently, whenever the steepness of pitch of any particular twist is being considered, it is usual to assume that the twist in question is seen in a *vertical* position, even

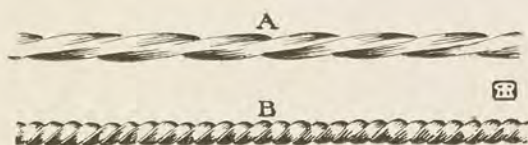


FIG. 105.—A. An open twist. B. A close twist.

if that should *not* be the case in the illustration or in the object which is being referred to.

Thus, whenever the pitch is steep the turns of the twist will always be long (Fig. 105, A) as compared with those of another twist which is less steep in pitch (Fig. 105, B), and the twist A may be described as loose or open, while B is tight or close or compact.

These two examples which are used for this illustration were each of them made of a piece of square wire of the same size.

But there are instances where the degree of compactness is better described by the character of a section of the twist which is under consideration. For example, a twist of seven round wires of the same size will be circular in section and very compact, provided that the wires are allowed to group themselves in their natural relative positions, that is to say, for six of the wires to surround and enclose

the seventh wire; but a twist made of the same seven wires laid side by side will give a thin oblong section, and a very open formation.

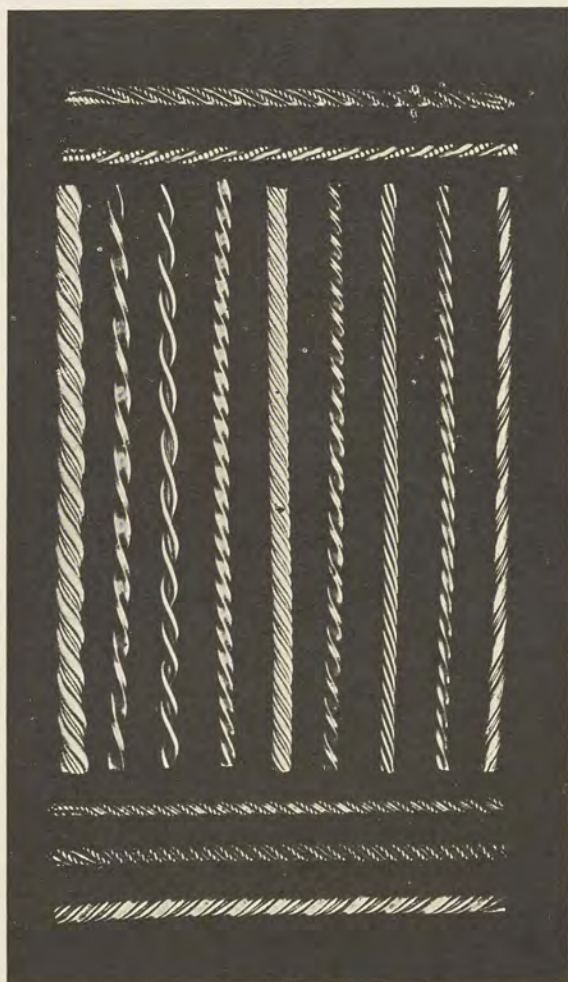


FIG. 106.—Simple and compound twists.

If two round wires are twisted together, but not too tightly, the pitch will be steep and the degree of compactness slight, and in proportion as the degree of compactness is

increased by further twisting, so will the steepness of the pitch be diminished.

Now, sometimes a plain twist of this kind is wanted which shall have a very full, round, compact appearance, and yet it may be necessary that it shall at the same time have quite a steep pitch. To obtain this effect, three or four or even more wires are twisted together instead of only two. The addition of even one extra wire will make a considerable difference in the degree of *compactness*, with any given amount of twisting, and yet the general appearance of the resulting twist will remain similar to that obtained before the extra wire was added; but if more wires are used, the resemblance to the original twist will not be very close. In compound twists, that is to say, in those which contain wires of different sections, or which contain some plain wires as well as one or more others which have previously been twisted or beaded, the final effect may differ according to whether the various components are all twisted together, or whether some of them are inserted *after* the twisting of the group has been done.

Sometimes all the constituents of a compound twist are made to follow in the same direction, but in other cases much of the beauty results from inserting a left-hand twist among the coils of a right-hand one. Again, in combining a set of separate twists, in order to form a compound arrangement, the final twisting may need to be done in the opposite direction to that of the individual members. By this means, for example, the chain-like effect of some of the specimens in Fig. 107 is produced. Thus, if a length of plain right-hand twist is made out of two round wires twisted together very tightly from left to right, and if this length of twist is cut up into two or more pieces which are now laid side by side, then, if the *group* of twists be turned in the direction opposite to that in which the original twist was made—that is to say, if the group is twisted from right to left—the result will be that while the composite left-hand twist is being formed all the separate right-hand twists of which it is composed will at the same time be gradually untwisted, and the more

closely the composite twist is twined, the more will the twisting of its components become individually opened.

But as these components are being forced into close contact with one another by the process of composite twisting, it follows that they are not individually free to

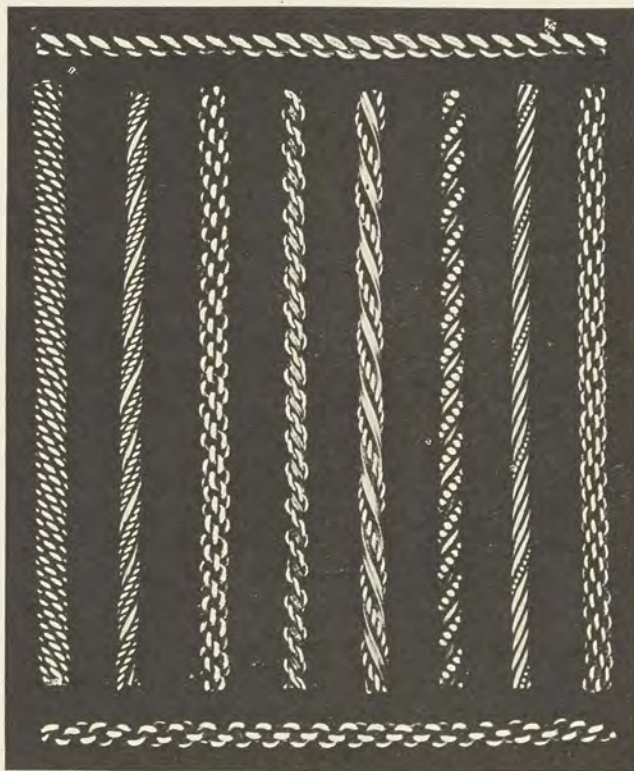


FIG. 107.—Compound twists.

open out equally in all directions, and so it comes about that they expand in that direction only in which they *are* free—that is to say, from the centre outwards, and thus it is that the outside turns of the separate wires bulge out in the manner which is apparent in several of the twists illustrated in Fig. 107.

There is a certain stage in the formation of this particular

kind of compound twist when all of these bulging turns come into line with each other vertically, and that is the

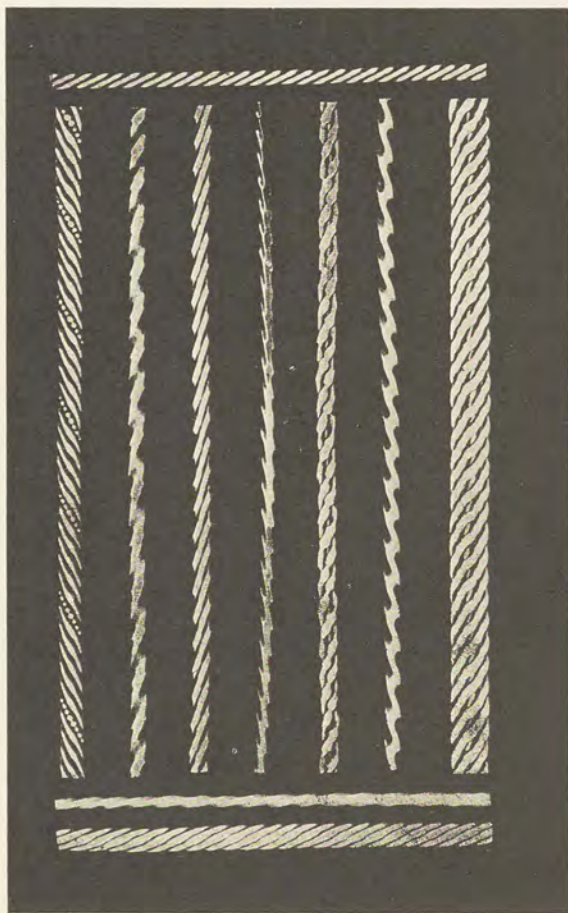


FIG. 108.—Simple and compound twists—flattened.

moment at which to stop the twisting, if it is desired to produce the chain-like appearance.

In making this and some other varieties of twists, it is often an open question how many component wires or twists should be used, and sometimes the general character of the

twist may remain much the same whether it has two, three, four, or even more components.

The examples in Figs. 108 and 109 are mostly selected from those which have already been illustrated in preceding



FIG. 109.—Simple and compound twists—flattened.

plates, but they are altered in appearance very considerably by a little hammering. In such cases it is sometimes of the greatest importance to unwind some of the small components, after the compound twist has been made, but before any hammering has been done. When the small

members have been removed, the large twist may be flattened without disfiguring the smaller wires, and these may afterwards be replaced uninjured. In this way a pleasant contrast is obtained.

There are other cases in which a particular effect can



FIG. 110.—Plaited wires, some of them flattened.

only be obtained by inserting a fine twist, after it has been hammered flat, in a space which has been prepared for it in a compound twist.

In addition to the many variations which are possible with simple and compound twists, there is also much that is interesting and beautiful to be done by plaiting wire.

Some examples are shown in Fig. 110, where a few are illustrated both before and after having been hammered flat.

This flattening produces an exceedingly decorative effect in some plaits owing to the fact that the spreading of the wires under the hammer varies in amount according as to whether another wire crosses underneath or not.

But apart from the alterations produced by different amounts of hammering, quite considerable variations are obtainable from equal numbers of the same kind and size of wire, merely by changing the ways in which the wires are grouped. Thus, twelve plain round wires may of course be plaited together as three sets of four, or as four sets of three, or as six sets of two each. Moreover, if six sets of two wires each be plaited together, there are at least three different ways of doing it, and each of these ways produces a slightly different pattern of plait.

It will also be observed that one of the sample plaits illustrated in Fig. 110 displays the decorative value obtained by introducing fine twists between plain wires in a broad plait, while in another a bold rich effect results from a similar use of beaded wire.

When you have finished a length of plaiting, anneal it carefully, grip one end in the bench vice and the other end in a hand vice, and pull the latter strongly. The result may perhaps surprise you. But always remember that if *beaded* wire has been used, it will not bear much stretching (see pp. 231, 232).



## CHAPTER I

### ON LEARNING BY MAKING MISTAKES



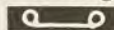
IN order to illustrate some of the uses of twisted wires in construction and decoration, let us now turn to Fig. 111, p. 265, and Fig. 115, p. 274, taking Fig. 111 first.


Here the contour and some of the inner lines of the design are emphasised and repeated, so that it is easy to trace the original skeleton; but it might perfectly well have been treated quite differently, and overlaid with other forms in a contrasting arrangement, which would have concealed the main lines of the construction instead of reinforcing them. Thus a skeleton design, such as those developed in Chapter XXXI., may form the basis of two or more finished pieces, which may eventually differ so much from each other that, to a casual observer, it would not be easy to see that at a previous point in their history they were identical.

As the reader will be asked to study these examples rather closely in order to follow an account of their development from an earlier stage in their evolution, which was illustrated near the beginning of the book, it may be well to seize the present opportunity for a few words of explanation in regard to a certain crudeness of design and to some faulty craftsmanship which will be apparent to any one who gives more than a passing glance to these two illustrations (Figs. 111 and 115) or to the objects themselves.

It was stated in the preface to "Simple Jewellery," of which the present volume is a new and enlarged edition, that a considerable part of the printed matter, as well as

many of the illustrations, had previously appeared in a series of articles in *The Art Journal*. During the preparation of the last of those articles, it became evident that, for the sake of completeness, two more illustrations of comparatively finished ornaments were needed, and it was only just possible to make these by hurried work, in order to get them photographed for reproduction within the limited time that happened to be left.

The arrangements of certain repetitions of the single unit , shown on pp. 159, 160 and 167, had been made quite quickly, just in order to demonstrate how large a variety of patterns can quite easily be discovered by this method, and without any ulterior notion that some of these patterns might possibly be wanted after a while for further development, let alone that they might have to serve as the basis on which to build up examples of decorative treatment in connection with which they had not previously been contemplated.

And so, to save time, when a number of repetitions of one of these groups , were soldered together into the various different arrangements which appear on p. 160, the ends of the wires out of which the loops were formed were not themselves soldered, as they should have been, so as to prevent these loops from opening out later on when exposed to a strain, the reason for which will be fully explained presently.

This was, of course, a highly reprehensible proceeding, but as an extenuating circumstance it may be urged that to have repaired this omission would have involved, in that one small illustration (on p. 160) alone, no less than 1,170 *additional* places, every one of which would have had to be individually soldered. Moreover, in order that the soldering of these loops should be neat and workmanlike, the ends of the wires should all have been filed off quite square, instead of having been left as the nippers cut them, so that if both of these points are taken into consideration it will be seen that the saving of time effected by the adoption of some rather slipshod methods really was quite considerable, and

in the circumstances perhaps it may even have been permissible.

As touching the second of the two excuses which have



FIG. 111.—Silver pendant and chain.


been given, it should be added that at the time referred to the quick and easy and (it must now be admitted) fairly obvious method of squaring the ends of a number of short

pieces of wire, which was described and illustrated on p. 91, had not occurred to me.

Some emphasis is being laid on these defects so as to impress upon the reader the danger of falling into similar errors, as well as for another reason which will be explained presently.

Fig. 111 is an example of how one of the designs which are illustrated on p. 160 can be altered and enriched by the addition of some beaded wire and some twists, both simple and compound, and a few discs and domes as well as one stone, so as to convert the flat skeleton (Fig. 112) into a presentable pendant.



Fig. 112.—A geometrical arrangement of twelve repetitions of .


This skeleton design had resulted from arranging on simple geometrical lines twelve repetitions of a particular grouping of three of .

Fig. 112 is a photographic silhouette of a skeleton arrangement, identical with the one which was used in the construction of the pendant in Fig. 111, except that it was rather more carefully made, at all events in

so far as concerns the soldering of the ends of the wires which form the loops. It is interesting to notice that one result of soldering these ends more soundly is that the small angular spaces adjoining the loops have also got filled up with solder, and that this shows up as a defect. Probably the solder *was* applied somewhat too freely in order to make sure of joining the ends of the loops, but it is also worth mentioning that a "shadow-print" is apt to exaggerate a defect of that kind. It gives the outlines of the design "in silhouette" and takes no notice of *surface* lines, whereas in reality, even when the solder *has* bridged these little nicks across, it will generally have made only a sort of web across which leaves the surface lines of the wires unconfused.

In addition to the means of enrichment just enumerated,

this example seemed to call for the introduction of different planes, an effect which could be obtained by means of stretching up all the middle part of Fig. 111 so as to provide an eminence on which to mount the stone and the various members which constitute its setting (see Fig. 113).

And naturally enough, one result of this stretching was to cause the loops to open at any places where it happened that they were *not* held fast by solder. And as they *were* so held at many other points, the consequence was that the gaps which had appeared could not be closed up again



FIG. 113.—A side-view of the pendant in Fig. 111.

except by flattening out the bulge by the production of which these gaps had been caused. So whenever you have any idea that perhaps you may want to "dome up" your work after it has all been soldered together while in a flat state, it is very necessary to be exceptionally careful to make all the soldered joints very securely.

Now all this suggests an interesting point, the consideration, that is to say, of how far an object of this kind may be "modelled," by stretching, *after* much of the constructive soldering has been done, or, on the other hand, whether the effect aimed at ought rather to be achieved by supporting the parts in their proper relative positions *before* soldering.



## CHAPTER LI

### AN ANALYSIS OF SOME CONSTRUCTIVE DETAILS



No hard and fast rules can be observed at all rigidly in such cases as the one which has just been considered in the last chapter, and it must always be a matter for the craftsman's judgment, and that judgment must be based on individual experiment and observation. In the case under consideration the careful soldering of *all* points of junction between two or more parts of the same or different wires where they touch each other would probably have prevented the occurrence of any gaps in consequence of stretching. Whereas if the six middle groups **A** had been supported in such a way that no subsequent stretching would have been required, then there would have been a hard, edgy angularity about the result, instead of the soft rounded contour given by the stretching method. The reason for this soft rounded effect, which is generally so much more agreeable both to sight and touch, is as follows. At each place in the construction where two straight lengths of wire lie in close contact the stretching method does not disturb this close contact, but produces the required effect by a slight curving of all the parts without at the same time altering their position with relation to the parts which are adjacent to them. If, on the other hand, the separate parts or groups are all of them, at the time when the soldering is done, supported individually in such a way as to render any subsequent stretching unnecessary, that will mean that in order to produce a bulging effect out of a number of parts which are each and all of them flat, it

becomes necessary for each flat part to form a slight angle with relation to the parts which lie next to it. There are, of course, plenty of instances where an object which is built up out of a number of flat surfaces, each of which makes a slight angle with its neighbour, gives an effect which is more agreeable to both touch and sight, and more interesting also to the mind of the observer, than if it had followed a curve or a series of curves. But those instances will generally be confined to forms which are curved in one direction only, whereas a bulging bossed up form is curved in two directions which cross each other.

And so when a bulge of this kind is produced by supporting the parts in sloping positions previously to soldering them together, the result is not a true bulge, but an angular projection, whereas if all the parts lie on a flat surface while they are being soldered, and if the whole construction is afterwards skilfully domed up to the required degree upon a suitable supporting surface, such as a leather sandbag, then the whole contour of the bulge may take easy, pleasant curves without any projecting ridges or corners.

In ornaments built up out of a number of separate units, however, the latter way can only be practised where the general surface of the object which has to be stretched into a bulge is even and fairly free from excrescences. The bulge required can only have a moderate amount of projection, and the whole thing must not be too fragile or sprawly.\*

To proceed, however, with our investigation of other defects in this example, it will be noticed that the rather bold contour of compound twist, which gives in its general effect a suggestion of two interlaced triangles, does not follow the lines of the units well enough to be in close contact with them wherever that should have been possible.

It will also be seen that the effectiveness of this ornament depends, in a large measure, on contrast between plain wires and others which are not plain, but which are either beaded or twisted, all of them being arranged side by side and parallel with each other, in such a way as to emphasise and strengthen

\* The bulge will *increase* the strength and rigidity of the work.

the lines of the design, while at the same time the variously formed wires act as foils to each other, smooth surfaces contrasting with twists, and straight lines with beaded wires.

Now, at the apex or top of each triangular group the two

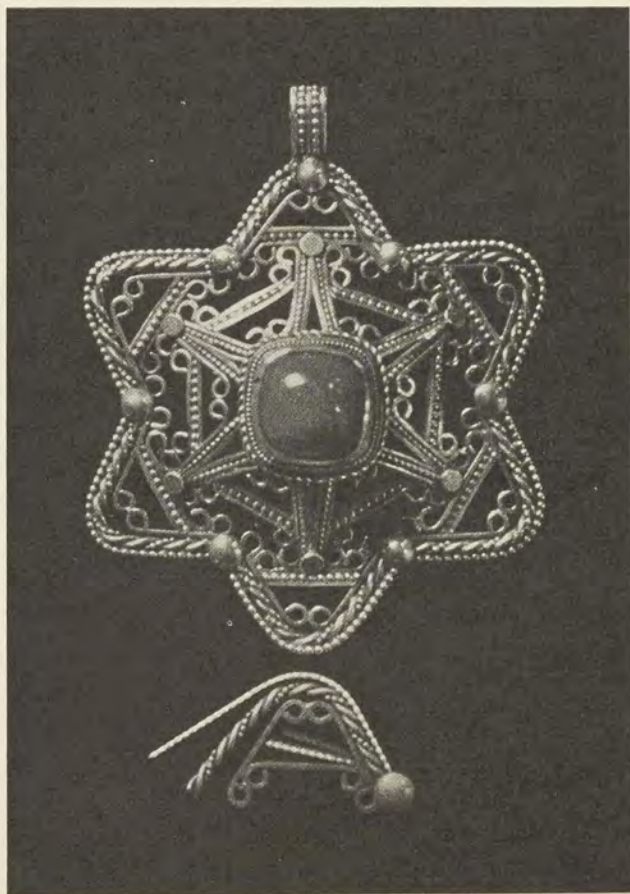



FIG. 114.—An enlarged view of the pendant in Fig. 111.

loops form a nick, and when the whole pendant was enclosed within a sort of frame of twisted wire, a rather awkward, empty looking space occurred at each of these places. And the reason why it looks awkward is that at these prominent places, where the twisted wire is bent round the pro-

jecting parts of the design, the line of plain wire which has been following along the inner side of the twist is suddenly found to be missing, and, in consequence, these spaces are not identical in shape. There are several ways in which that defect might have been made good, but it was not noticed at all at the time the pendant was being made.

One other blemish in the whole effect must not be overlooked, and that is that the chain is out of scale with the pendant, the links being too large and the twists too coarse. In the special circumstances already alluded to the job had to be done in the shortest possible time, and as it happened that a sufficient supply of both right and left-handed twist of that size out of which to make this chain had been left over from some other job, and that there was nothing else available that was any more suitable, it just had to do.

But it would have been much more satisfactory if the twist had been made out of rather thinner wire.

The other links of this chain provide a good example of the combined decorative and constructional value of clusters of grains, for if we had not had  with



which to fill up the nicks, it would be hard to say from which of those two points of view the resulting weakness would have been the most conspicuous.

Therefore, it is most necessary that these clusters should not only be securely soldered to the parts which they connect together, but that the separate grains of which each cluster is composed should all of them be very perfectly united also.

Before going on to consider the next illustration it may be worth mentioning that the domed discs which come at the angles of the compound twist in Fig. 111 serve the double purpose of helping both the design and the construction.

They save the design from being restless and fidgety, and they save the craftsman from the very fidgety job of making six accurately mitred joints in a compound twist. This

would have required much care, and even then no amount of care would have made it look really well (quite apart from the question of whether six additional sharp angles would have improved the design), because two ends of twist mitred together at an angle never can look well, unless one end is made of right-handed and the other end of left-handed twist. To carry the argument right on to its logical conclusion, even if the six pieces of compound twist had been alternately "right-handed" and "left-handed," so as to ensure perfect mitres, it is probable that the general effect would still have been quite unsatisfactory because of the restlessness resulting from the alternation of direction between each piece of twist and its neighbours.

The six flat discs which occur midway between each pair of domed ones also help both design and construction in a similar way. They contrast pleasantly with the domes, and they provide resting places for the eyes which might otherwise have been wearied by the large number of beads and of open loops; and just as the domes made accurately mitred joints unnecessary, so now the flat discs cover the extreme ends of the six pairs of wires which otherwise would have had to finish in six sharp points abutting against the sides of the wires which surround them, and that would have had a very unpleasant appearance. But it is worth noting that only the small number of domes and discs which have been used seem to be wanted. There is in each case a good reason for using them, and their addition certainly made a real improvement to the general effect of the design, which might, however, very easily have been spoilt if the number had been increased. When the addition of little features of this kind is obviously beneficial, it is often tempting to overdo their use. Well, *don't!*



## CHAPTER LII


### TRIFLES WHICH GIVE CHARACTER TO A DESIGN

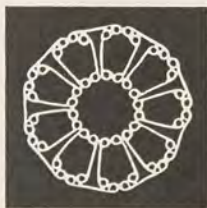


AND now let us examine Fig. 115 in the same spirit. Here again there are the same open loops, though they are not quite so bad this time because a less amount of stretching was enough to produce the less prominently bulged effect which was desired in this case. But the soldering of the long links in the chain is deplorably faulty.

Well, that is exactly one of those jobs which is apt to suffer most conspicuously when the force of circumstances, as here, compels hurried work, and to make matters considerably worse, this example had to be photographed before there had even been time to polish it, and so the dead whiteness of the pickled silver, seen against a solid black background, exaggerates the defects in a very unfortunate way.

In point of fact, it is only just to state that neither of these two examples look anything like as bad in reality as they do in the illustrations.

The lack of symmetry, which is rather too noticeable in Fig. 115, is no doubt mainly due to insufficient care in forming the units accurately to size (and this is very far from being an easy matter), as well as to the fact that the ends which form the loops were not soldered. The skeleton or basis upon which the pendant is constructed is composed of , repeated nine times, each group being flanked on either



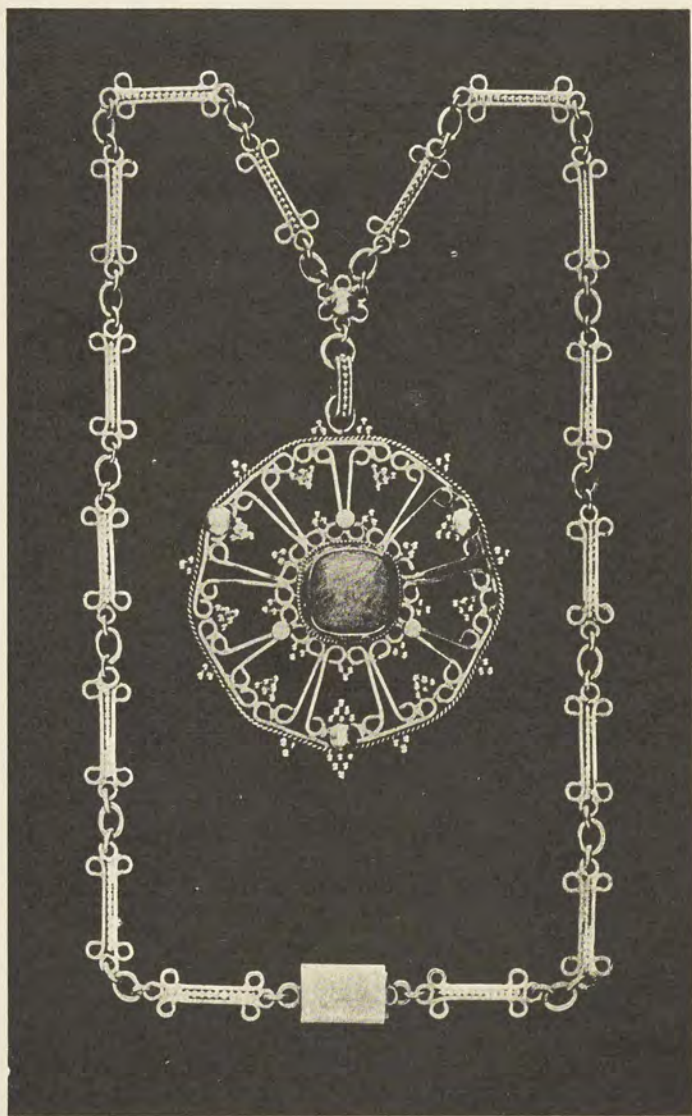
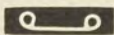


FIG. 115.—Silver pendant and chain.

side by one of its fellows. If one of these clusters is examined it will be seen to consist of our old friend  repeated three times, with an effect totally different from

that given by repetitions of a different group formed of three of the same unit which produced Fig. 111.

While noting that there *is* too great a lack of symmetry in this pendant (Fig. 115), it is well to recognise that useful hints may be picked up from such a defect, and that *too* much accuracy may easily spoil an ornament of this kind, about which there should be a certain sense of freedom. For example, it will be seen that the contour is that of a nine-sided figure with softly rounded corners, but that some of the sides, instead of being quite straight, are slightly hollow, and that this accidental hollow effect is pleasant. It will also be noticed that some of the corners are so much rounded off as to have almost disappeared, and that this is *unpleasant*. And so we see that by deliberately making all the nine sides *very slightly* hollow, we should probably improve the effect of the design, and that one consequence would be the emphasising of the corners which, otherwise, have a tendency to disappear. It is well to note also that this emphasising of those corners would not have made them *sharp*, but would merely have given them their proper degree of importance.

If our main idea had been to construct a nine-sided figure which should be as nearly as possible mathematically exact, we might not have made either of those two useful little discoveries.

The fact that a thin disc bridges over in each case the back of the joint between the clusters of grains and the framework of the pendant, and that these discs are soldered with equal security both to the grains and to the framework, ensures the attachment of the projecting grains being perfectly strong, and at the same time it much improves the appearance of the back of the pendant.

It is unfortunate that neither in Fig. 111 nor in Fig. 115 does the illustration adequately express the high value of the ring of finest beaded wire which encircles the base of the collet in which, in each case, the stone is set, but it is more apparent in the second plate than in the first, and the importance of using a beaded wire which will

give the minutest possible specks of light is fairly obvious here.

Perhaps you may have been wondering why with all these defects, and especially with serious lapses of workmanship, two such faulty illustrations should have been allowed to appear. Well, is it not true that it is just by their very defects that those two plates have enabled us to perceive, and to impress upon our memories, several really useful details connected either with construction or with design, or with both the one and the other ?

If workmanship and reproduction had both been faultless, all these useful bits of experience and of knowledge might easily have been missed by us, so that the greater part of these three chapters, which have certainly been particularly interesting and pleasant to write, would never have come into being at all.

The rather severe examination to which this little pendant (Fig. 115) has been subjected has also suggested another critical deduction, which it may possibly be worth while to explore briefly. On p. 164 we took the skeleton of this pendant as a pleasant example of inevitability in design, but now that we are looking at it as a completed ornament, the idea occurs that we should probably learn something useful by considering if there is any other conspicuous characteristic in it upon which the eye naturally dwells. And that leads us to notice the extent to which our interest is engaged by the two approximately circular and concentric wreaths of small ring shapes which are formed by the loops of the units.

There are several small details, which all help to arouse interest here. The loops, being merely the result of the way in which the ends of the wire units were finished off, are not *detached* rings—although at a first glance one might expect to find that they were—and so, although they *suggest* circular rings, they are *not* actually circular, and the spaces which they enclose are just slightly pear or tear shaped. This formation causes them to associate themselves together in pairs, symmetrically disposed, and the latter idea is

accentuated by the choice we have of taking for the centre line of each pair of loops either the sharp angle formed by the straight lines of the units, or else the decorative cluster of three grains, which contrast so pleasantly with the loops themselves and with the spaces enclosed by the loops, whether from the point of view of their proportional size, or from that of the contrasted incidence of light and shade.

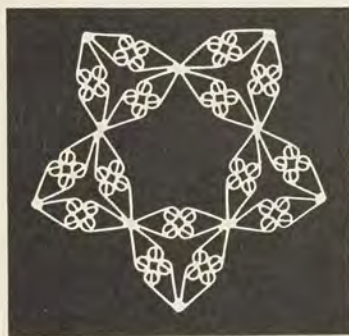
These effects of contrast and proportion are further helped more than might be supposed by the three discs which just in a very slight degree break the continuity of the circular arrangement of the wreath of loops.

The outer wreath is more pronouncedly irregular, which happens fortunately, for a truly circular and complete ring composed of as many loops as would be needed here would be likely to look decidedly dull and monotonous. There is a definite rhythm in its irregularity, interrupted, but not too violently, at three equidistant points by the domes, each of which covers a pair of the loops and echoes in a more conspicuous way the triangular suggestion given by the three little discs which occur at intervening points around the inner wreath.

No doubt the crestings of small grains in clusters contribute helpfully to the wreath idea, which the two circles of loops convey, and it is interesting to note that there is hardly any suggestion of wreaths in the unadorned skeleton, which formed the basis of this pendant. The line of the collet and the fine beaded wire decoration which surrounds it must also be recognised as having something to do with binding the loops together in a roughly circular frame. Notice, however, that the stone is *not* circular, but that its corners are soft enough and its sides full enough to adapt it for use in a place which might easily have been circular. If that *had* been so, and if the outer line had been mathematically correct, especially if there had been, say, eight sides to it instead of nine—well, it would probably have been a dull-looking thing.

## CHAPTER LIII

### A MARKET FOR UNIT JEWELLERY



*Is there a market for unit jewellery? Well, before trying to give a direct answer to that question, let us first consider if it is not true that there is at least one section of the British buying public which has never yet been catered for with enough appreciation or imagination. If we admit the truth of that*

suggestion, we shall probably also agree that this section of the buying public which has been neglected is neither small nor deficient in purchasing power.

When we go away from home for a holiday most of us need very little tempting to induce us to buy a few small gifts for friends, whether they are absent or present. The amount which we spend in that way is generally in pretty direct proportion to the force of the temptation to which we find ourselves exposed; but does it not only too often happen that there is no temptation whatever—that we can find nothing at all which attracts or tempts us even a little?

Still, have we not many of us got among our possessions certain things—very likely they may be things of little or no intrinsic value—and even perhaps with only quite a moderate degree of artistic charm, but things, nevertheless, from which we would not willingly be parted, just because of the holiday associations with which they are so inseparably bound up? Those associations it is very rarely within the power of money to buy for us, but the things in question were bought,

and in a perfectly ordinary prosaic way most likely. The holiday may even have been none of our own, and the associations may have just grown out of the mental picture (highly coloured and exaggerated as likely as not) which was created for us by some one else's description of places and experiences which we ourselves may never have seen or felt, but these descriptions accompanied the gift which had been brought back for us from some far-off place by a returned traveller, and so they remain inseparably part of that gift, and it may be the best part of it.

Although the fondness with which such things are preserved, especially when they are in some way useful, may have no logical justification in their actual value, whether pecuniary or artistic, that is only a proof of the genuineness of the demand which is aroused in most of us by the holiday spirit, and by the attraction which some places have for us. This demand is on the one hand for something to buy, and on the other hand for something to interest the mind and to please the eyes—something, if possible, rather intimately connected with the place. And what do we find offered us?

An appreciable attempt has undoubtedly been made during the past thirty years or more by a few energetic and public-spirited people to foster the growth and revival of local arts and crafts here and there in these islands. But even so it remains true that provision is more frequently made in a way familiar to most of us, in the form, say, of a mug, or an ash tray, which loudly proclaims the fact that it is a present from Margate, or Blackpool, as the case may be; though no one is so simple as to imagine these things have been made locally. But does any one doubt that—other things being equal—they would sell better if they *had* been made more or less on the spot?

It is this perfectly reasonable demand for local interest whose value, even if admitted from the sentimental point of view, seems to have been so much under-estimated and ignored from the salesman's point of view, and that is surely rather stupid. Well, is not *locally made* unit jewellery quite suitable as one means of satisfying some part of this demand?

Can it be doubted that there *is* a market for it? In addition to the desire to buy something, which surely is general enough, there is another desire whose existence is proved by the fact that most of us are always very glad if when we are away on a holiday we can by chance find anything in the nature of a local industry going on. At least, that is so if visitors are admitted so that they may see things—like those which they have just been buying, or which they are just feeling an inclination to buy—while such things are actually in course of being made.

Perhaps it may be easiest to convey an expression of this feeling by allowing the memory to go back so that one may realise how very pleasantly the mind can dwell on any such occasions which may have come within one's own personal experience. One may have a distant recollection, for example, of a certain holiday time long ago which stands out boldly on an illuminated page of the memory just because *that* time there were some visits to a local lapidary's workshop, where a few of the simple mysteries of the cutting and grinding and polishing of fossils and pebbles and other stones were revealed to an eager, childish curiosity. After the lapse of more years than it is pleasant to calculate with exactitude, is not a mere momentary whiff of turpentine still enough even now to recall quite vividly the picture of that little shed on the cliff's side and much of what went on in it during those happy days, to say nothing of the delights of putting into practice during the ensuing winter at home some few of the scraps of knowledge whose acquisition gave such an unforgettable zest to that particular holiday?

Or perhaps there was a still more moving experience during another holiday when by some miracle admission was gained to a small pottery works. Once inside the building, who could think about the passage of time while the wonders of the potter's wheel enthralled the youthful gaze? Who could think of anything at all outside while one lump of clay after another rushed obediently to follow the magic touch of the potter's thumb and fingers through a constantly changing series of shapes, until in a twinkling

it leapt into the form of a tall hollow vase or a perfectly shaped bowl?

All this perhaps has but little to do with unit jewellery, but are not these feelings of interest in seeing things made common to all people? And is it not perfectly legitimate to take advantage of such universal feelings in order to stimulate the growth of a demand for those things which one is able to make?

Perhaps one reason why our holiday resorts are deficient in local crafts is that, as a nation, we seem never to have had, or even to have wanted to have any peasant jewellery of our own, though it is just peasant jewellery which, at foreign places, often makes the most successful appeal to visitors who have a little money to spend.

No doubt the Anglo-Saxon race is, for the most part, stolidly indifferent to the pleasure to be derived from cultivating the æsthetic faculties, blindly content to live in ugliness, and lazily averse from spending its leisure industriously, or productively. But the efforts that have been made to establish handicrafts in at least a few parts of the country and to revive such traditions as we can boast of, have already begun to show that there is a fair amount of artistic ability which is inactive only because it does not know how to express itself.

One very great difficulty in doing that is apt to be designing—a difficulty which frequently arises simply from having nothing particular to say, and as the author has had personal experience of that difficulty himself, he is the more inclined to believe that the method upon which he happens to have stumbled, whereby designs suitable for simple jewellery (as also in his opinion for many other things too), with a certain degree of freshness and interest, will GROW OF THEMSELVES in an apparently unlimited number in nature's own way—he believes that this method does present a possible solution.

Any one who has examined and thought about the kind of jewellery which has been described and illustrated in the foregoing pages of this treatise will probably agree that it is

almost entirely a matter of judicious selection and arrangement, and that is one reason why it is such a fascinating craft. While it offers wide scope to the skill and invention of experienced and accomplished craftsmen, it also provides an attractive outlet for the abilities and industry of the humblest lover of the arts, if he has just a moderate capacity for using tools. And here is a good opportunity to throw out a suggestion, which may perhaps contribute, in however small a way, towards solving part of a difficult and urgent problem of the present time.

That problem consists in finding remunerative occupations which may be within the power of men who have suffered very grievous things in the service of civilisation and of their country.

Most holiday resorts have either a pier or else public gardens, where it would seem quite natural to find a stall containing a display of local productions offered for sale; and if the things displayed were the work of some of those men, such a stall might surely be financed in the first instance by local support, the expenses being, of course, repaid out of commission on sales, which should soon provide a sufficient sum. Then, as to production. Where no craftwork of the kind is already made, the best chance of success would doubtless lie in avoiding ambitious work. Buttons and clasps, muff chains, simple pendants and some of the other things which were mentioned earlier in the book, can be made by quick learners who have a natural facility for handling tools, after a few months' training under a capable teacher, especially if no precious stones are used. Indeed, if the training is continued steadily from day to day, we may substitute "weeks" for "months." Moreover—and in this especially lies the application of the idea to the needs of the present time—such things can perfectly well be made by some of those who are physically unable to follow more active pursuits. By a reasonable use of co-operative methods between a small number of men of varying tastes and abilities it should not be very difficult to deal efficiently with all the different processes into which unit jewellery so readily

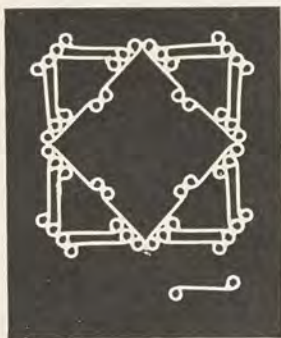
divides itself (see pp. 24 to 26), without expecting too much from any one member of the co-operative group.

A plan of this kind would particularly facilitate the first establishment of small associations of workers on self-supporting lines. So long as the desire to learn exists, it does not take long to acquire a fair degree of skill in carrying through a single process, or even perhaps a small group of kindred processes. So that if there were, say, half a dozen beginners who had decided to try and establish a small local unit jewellery trade, they might get going as soon as each one of the six had attained a moderate degree of proficiency in less than one-sixth of the total number of processes which have been described in this treatise, because some of those processes would not be wanted in the early days of a young concern.



## CHAPTER LIV

### OCCUPATIONS FOR THE DELICATE



It has already been mentioned that a large proportion of the bent-wire units illustrated in Figs. 14 to 14D [as well as many of the small designs which resulted from playing—for no other word is really quite appropriate—from playing, then, with these units and from arranging groups of them so as to form patterns] were made by the author in bed during a period of convalescence. He found in doing this that he always had at his disposal the means of occupying his hands and his imagination in a pleasant and interesting way. This is an occupation which offers to any one who practises it the chance that at any moment he may happen upon something fresh, something which has not been done before, something which is, in however small a way, in the nature of a discovery.

Some people, who for one reason or another, cannot practise the craft in its entirety, may find a congenial and sufficient occupation in the mere making of wire units, such as those illustrated in Figs. 14 to 14D, which require only strong fingers, tolerably good eyesight, and a moderate amount of patience; and this might in many cases be combined with the soldering together of groups of these units to form “repeats,” and with the making of spherical grains, and of clusters of grains soldered together (Figs. 1, 2 and 3). While the building up and discovery of patterns by the moving about and arranging of units or repeats of units into designs might provide a useful, pleasant and

interesting pastime for some whose choice of occupation has been still more grievously limited. There is also the making of records of the patterns and designs which have been evolved, and if suitable appliances were provided, there are methods of doing this which might also be within the power of any one who had formed the designs. More than one such method occurs among those mentioned in Chapter XXX.

Some allusions have been made already to the uses to which bent-wire units may be put for inventing, constructing and experimenting with patterns intended for many other purposes besides those of the jeweller, and it may not be out of place here to refer the reader to those pages (108, 168, 179). Any one possessed of ingenuity will be able to think out further developments, in some of which the units will do more than merely provide a means of forming patterns, that is to say, developments to which units can contribute constructively. Units may obviously be made of other materials than wire, and similarly it does not require any great effort of the imagination to picture uses of the same idea in which not only the material but also the *scale* would be widely different from those which are appropriate to jewellery.

It would be rash to hazard a guess as to the number of possible variations capable of being made by bending pieces of wire of a given length and section, but perhaps nearly enough has been said and demonstrated to convince most people that there are other good new units waiting to be discovered by people who want them. In Chapter XXIII. we have seen that the author's first belief that all the shapes into which wire of one given length and section can be bent must necessarily fall into one or other of the five main types described as the "staple," "crescent," "S," "V," and "cotter-pin" types (Figs. 14 to 14D) is erroneous. The ornaments, with one of which each chapter of this book opens, were the result of an afterthought when the manuscript was believed to be complete, but a large number of them—perhaps the majority—including some of the most effective of the patterns, were composed of *new units* only

first discovered at the time when these ornaments were being made, and therefore not to be found in Figs. 14 to 14b; in fact, they do not belong to any one of those five types. Also Figs. 45 and 46 indicate more than a score of subdivisions of a type which cannot be included in any one of the five first mentioned. Even if no other distinct types are possible, though personally I do not dream of making any such assertion, a little thought will show that this last type is probably capable of yielding a much larger number of variations than any of the other five!

Among those in Figs. 14 to 14b there are many which are easily capable of development into further variations. This is one of the fascinations of this game of unit-making. While the act of bending a bit of wire to produce a certain required form is proceeding, a suggestion may be noticed of some fresh modification which may also in itself be susceptible of a whole series of minor qualifications, producing a new family of units.

Or one may arrive at these additions to the store in another way. There are many units in Figs. 14 to 14b which appear to be solitary individuals with very few, if any, near relations. That, however, may sometimes prove, on further investigation, to have been a false impression, and it becomes an interesting problem to take these isolated specimens one by one and to study their characteristics and the way in which it is likely that they may have been evolved, for such a study is nearly sure to find its reward from time to time in some little discovery or other which may perhaps reveal a useful new series. This is a kind of puzzle game which will always be attractive to certain types of mind, especially when the variety of occupation accessible is rather limited. And if after a time it becomes wearisome, then the quiet routine work of making a store of repetitions of any selected units will be found to be restful and mentally soothing, always provided that the forms which have been chosen are not too difficult to reproduce.

But there is no need for that to happen, because for one unit that is really difficult or worrying to make, there are

dozens, the making of which, with suitable pliers and possibly a little instruction, is at least as easy as knitting.

This quiet kind of straightforward repetition work is far from distasteful to most of those people who like "to be doing something with their hands," and who like—as we all do—to see the results of their manual activity steadily accumulating before their eyes. And if this is true of people of that temperament when in good health, how much more so when they are cut off from most of their usual occupations, when the normal working of the nervous system has been disturbed, or when they are suffering from mental depression and anxiety.

But for those who are impatient of much monotonous work there is always the anticipation of the excitement—for it really is exciting—the excitement of making new designs with the units, merely by moving them about into different relative positions, as soon as enough of them have been made to allow of trying what effects they will give when grouped together, first in twos and threes and fours, and then in the more complex arrangements which may so easily be made up out of repetitions of one of those primary groups—as shown in Figs. 69 and 73. And although there is plenty of fun and even of excitement in devising new patterns out of fresh ways of using old units, it goes without saying that there is considerably more of both in making first experiments in design with some *new* unit, which you have perhaps only just discovered.

Perhaps also a reference may be permitted here to the main subject of Chapter XXVI., pp. 130—138.

The illustrations of a particular application of unit jewellery which was described in that chapter endeavoured to give some indication of [the scope which that kind of work seems to offer to the inventive and constructive abilities of some of those who have been so cruelly deprived of almost all the ordinary opportunities for any such activities.

It is pleasant enough for a time to amuse or to occupy oneself with the processes described or alluded to on pp. 144—157. But none of these processes can be expected to do more

than *partially* satisfy a very general and healthy craving which is pretty strong in most of us if only we would give it encouragement, I mean the desire to *make* something.

Bending wire so as to form units, and making patterns with the units after one has formed them, especially when one has the consciousness or the belief that perhaps they have not been done before, undoubtedly gratifies the wish to create, and that is not such a small matter as the objects produced might seem to indicate. But the words "to make something," to my thinking, do imply the further meaning to construct something, and to construct something which shall be composed of more than one part, and a thing that shall be a more or less completed and permanent object when it has *been* constructed, and more still, something that shall be either useful or beautiful, or even possibly both one and the other.

In Chapter XXVI. some proof was offered of the assertion that there are possibilities for the construction of nice-looking useful things, even when the worker who does the construction is unable to do the soldering himself, and the postscript to Chapter XXXVII. gives some further indications of what can be done in this direction. If any one who is handicapped by physical limitations should find in the suggestions embodied in the two chapters just mentioned a possibility of satisfying a desire to "make something," he will be likely to discover for himself other applications of the same ideas, while he advances in skill, and in that practical experience of the handling of tools and materials, from which alone it is natural that fresh ideas and developments should arise.

Such a field of activity must inevitably be a limited one, but there are two considerations from which it may be reasonable for any one who greatly desires to extend it further to draw hope of success in such efforts.

The first of these is, that whatever there may be that is useful in Chapter XXVI. and in the postscript to Chapter XXXVII. resulted entirely from the accident of observing that the chain illustrated in Fig. 54 was virtually a finished piece of

construction *before* it was ready for any soldering to be done on it.

This naturally gave rise to the reflection that there might be other units from which would result other patterns of chain differing in appearance, but all having the same distinguishing characteristic—viz., that the construction might or should precede the soldering.

And when that had been proved to be true, some of the results again naturally gave rise to a further reflection—viz., that it ought to be possible to devise suitable fastenings for such chains on lines similar to those on which the chains themselves had been evolved.

The second consideration is that the idea of construction without or before soldering has only been pursued in these two chapters from the point of view of small chains and fastenings. Any one who finds the making of such things on these lines interesting, but who wants to carry the idea further, might do well to consider whether it might not be applied on a larger scale, perhaps to making things other than chains and fastenings.



## CHAPTER LV

### PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND AFTERTHOUGHTS



WHAT, then, it may be asked, is the best way of setting to work to carry out this idea of developing unit jewellery-making first, perhaps, mainly as a curative, but afterwards as a remunerative occupation for some of those to whom not only this country, but the whole world,

owes such an incalculable debt?

The first necessity would seem to be the training of a group of teachers, who might themselves be recruited from among those whose disablement, while preventing them from following their former avocations, is not of such a nature as to interfere with their first learning, and then teaching this easy and pleasant work.

To many people, no doubt, that may sound impracticable or, at all events, likely to take a long time to accomplish.

But need it?

The particular application of unit jewellery which is treated of in Chapter XXVI. has greatly strengthened my belief that it need not. No more than a very little time is really necessary to get such an arrangement *started*, and if once it is started on reasonable lines it might surely develop rapidly.

That particular application is, curiously enough, one of the very last things which have been added to this new edition. It is true that the bit of chain, from which Fig. 54 was drawn, has been in existence a long time, that it was indeed illustrated in an inconspicuous way in "Simple

Jewellery," and it is true also that some months ago it became clear to me that this particular little bit of construction had the merit of being less dependent on soldering than any of the other illustrations which had then been prepared or contemplated. But it was only very recently, indeed it was actually after the writing of the preface (which is presumably one of the very last things to be done in making a book), that it occurred to me to insert a new chapter (No. XXVI.), and, as a necessary condition precedent to doing that, to try a few more experiments. The results of those experiments have provided all the other illustrations of chains which come in that chapter. Some still later experiments have provided the fastenings which form the subject of and the illustrations to the postscript to Chapter XXXVII.

My object in Chapter XXVI. was to prove, if possible, that Fig. 54 was *not* the *only* available example of a bit of unit jewellery work which showed that construction *may* sometimes quite properly come *before* soldering, though before making those experiments I had nothing definite to go upon. But now, in the experience gained from those trial pieces which are illustrated in Chapter XXVI., there lies the source of a new hope and a new confidence.

Silver soldering is a rather tricky little process to acquire, especially if circumstances make it essential that the beginner must first attain proficiency in the use of the mouth blowpipe.

I am willing to admit that most of the practising jewellers I have met with will use no other, and yet, in spite of that, I must confess that I am not a bit convinced that it is really the best. Although, like other people, I *have* used a mouth blowpipe for jewellery work, I should be very sorry to be obliged to rely upon one except as a last stand-by in case something should go wrong with my "Standing" blower.

Clearly, if no first beginnings in constructional work could be started without a preliminary course of training in the use of the blowpipe, progress might well be slower, and the

incentive to mastering the art of using the blowpipe and of silver soldering might be less active in those circumstances than if the learner had *begun* by constructing such objects as those which are illustrated on pp. 130 to 136. For then he would be constantly spurred on, in his anxiety to acquire the knowledge and skill necessary to solder his work well and quickly, by his natural impatience to see it really finished and actually ready for sale or for use. Probably also general progress would be much slower if there was practically no construction done until after proficiency in soldering had been attained.

Therefore it is a great encouragement to find out, even as an afterthought and so late in the day, that the best way of *beginning* to learn the practice of unit jewellery-making may after all be to start right off at building up small pieces of constructed ornament, instead of deferring all this stimulating excitement until an ability to accomplish silver soldering has been slowly acquired as a somewhat difficult preliminary.

It is true enough that several of the chains which are illustrated in Chapter XXVI. would not often be made successfully at the first attempt, and no doubt that might apply with still greater force to the fastenings illustrated in the postscript to Chapter XXXVII., but the important point is that even if the first attempts were not very successful, it is highly improbable that they would ever be such entire failures as to cause despondency. On the contrary, even the first attempts would almost certainly give much encouragement to any beginner by resulting in something fairly passable, so long as a start was made—

- (1) On one of the easiest examples.
- (2) With a real desire to succeed.
- (3) Under capable supervision.

The last condition is quite the least important. If the technical chapters have been attentively read and if the illustrations are carefully studied, personal assistance would often be quite unnecessary.

To return for a moment to the practical consideration of

how it is best to attack the process of soldering, I feel convinced that wherever even two or three unit jewellers are gathered together the only rational course is to have a supply of compressed air laid on in pipes parallel with those conveying gas to each "place," and that this is more likely to be done if many workers are clamouring for facilities to complete for sale work which has already been constructed, than if a supply of air under pressure is advised merely as being likely to make for efficiency in a general way.

In the course of a few months a small band of travelling instructors could teach a great many learners in different parts of the country how to make wire units, and how to use some of these for first attempts at construction on the lines suggested in Chapter XXVI. They could also show, in between times, how to make records of patterns built up out of units grouped together in clusters. Occasional demonstrations and lectures illustrated by lantern slides, or perhaps better still by film pictures, would supplement this instruction and stimulate the learner's interest by giving a more complete and vivid insight into the possibilities of this branch of jewellery work, and by giving also some slight survey of the jeweller's craft as a whole.

In the case of any learners who showed enough interest and a promise of becoming good craftsmen, the more difficult arts of soldering, and mounting, and stone-setting could be acquired in the same way, or by some selected students being sent to the nearest good technical school for a few months. The outfit required is not very expensive, and the benefits might surely be far-reaching.

Can it be doubted that those craftsmen whose special bent lies in the direction of jewellery, but who find that they have not got the faculty of inventing fine designs for important works, may yet produce charming and beautiful and useful things if they will only allow their materials, their tools, and their common sense to guide them? Surely, moreover, no one who takes up this work seriously, on some such lines as those now indicated, and enjoys it, can possibly fail to develop some power of design, so long as the mind is

kept constantly alert to seize every suggestion which is offered by the material and so long as the mind—and fingers—are not allowed to continue repetitions to the point of making the work mechanical. We must not go on repeating the same arrangement for long without considering what alternatives or variations are possible. But, on the other hand, it is at least doubtful if there is any advantage in courting disappointment by premature efforts after originality. Originality is more likely to come unconsciously from a habit of observant study of materials and processes.

Those who are beginning, and those who, having begun, may have become conscious of a want of ideas for design, will do well to limit their practical work for a while to making a store of units and grains, discs, rings, etc., for future use, taking care at the same time to lose no opportunity for the study of old work—a study which no true artist will ever neglect. The foregoing pages have attempted to show that even the first exercises need not be dull, and, moreover, that all the results so produced may be developed later on into actual finished pieces, if they are not required for permanent reference in the form of samplers.

After deciding what is to be the standard length of wire for your units, set to work at making an alphabet of forms. Don't trouble about pencil and paper for that, whether you can draw with ease or not; take the wire itself, and try every way you can think of for using it, with the help of a few simple tools. Follow each way and each by-way right out to its logical conclusion. When you think you have done so—when you think you have exhausted every possibility—just put it away for a few days; take up something else, and when you come to a standstill over that, go back to the unit hunt, and you will probably find fresh by-ways opening out and leading you along quiet, unfrequented paths, which pencil and paper would never have revealed to you. Don't say, "Haven't I done nearly enough of these variations?" but rather, "Is there no other possible permutation or combination which I might try now?" The early ones will doubtless have some nice things amongst

them, but so also, in all probability, will the later and less obvious ones reward your perseverance no less richly.

It is not unlikely also, for that matter, that some arrangements or combinations which, when made, look ridiculously obvious, will only occur to you after you have begun to wonder whether you have not about exhausted that particular idea. Certainly, that has been my own experience over and over again. It has been well said, "Simplicity is the end of art—by no means the beginning"!!!



## CHAPTER LVI

### THE EDUCATIONAL POINT OF VIEW



THE thought has probably occurred to many of those who have taken up the teaching of a handicraft professionally that it is a strange thing how very little there is in the way of a traditional or generally recognised system of education available for the use and guidance either of students or of teachers.

It seems to have been left to chance and the judgment of the teacher to decide what should come first, what next, and how the beginner should be led on, from stage to stage, through the many processes which go to compose the mental and manual equipment of a capable worker in any one craft.

Yet it will hardly be denied that it is of the utmost importance to the welfare, commercial as well as artistic, of all countries that the crafts should be taught in a thoroughly intelligent and efficient way, calculated to develop not only the manual dexterity but also the inventive powers of the learners.

In connection with crafts which have fallen into disuse, so that no living tradition has been kept up, the absence of any such system is not at all strange; nor is it surprising in those other cases where anything of the kind which may have survived has only done so by reason of the enthusiasm, or even the conservatism, of just a few isolated workers. But that is not the case with jewellery as a whole, although it is true that in this country, at all events, certain branches

of this craft lie quite outside the experience of all but a few workers.

Still, jewellery is practised everywhere. It was carried on with amazing skill even in such remote times as during the early Egyptian dynasties, and it has never been in any danger of becoming a lost art. On the contrary, its educational value was so fully realised in mediæval Italy that the goldsmith's workshop was in those days regarded as the best primary school for a student of the fine arts. Nor can it be said that as a craft it lacks suggestions for suitable exercises. By no means. It may even be doubted if there is any other craft whatever which offers such obvious and ample opportunities for the learner to acquire much of the experience necessary merely by following, under suitable guidance, the dictates of common sense; and to acquire his experience, moreover, in such a way that, while ostensibly learning its practical side, his attention is necessarily called at the same time to the scientific and artistic aspects of what he is doing.

No, the more probable explanation of the absence of any recognised educational system is that until recently the crafts have not been taught outside of the workshops in which they are regularly practised, and in these an elaborate educational system is not so very necessary.

Undoubtedly the workshop is the ideal place in which to learn a craft, and in a thriving workshop there will always be plenty of elementary work to be done, on which the apprentice can practise.

Under the guidance of a wise and skilful master the ordinary round of work will provide all the experience a student needs to teach him those things which he cannot learn alone—so long, that is, as he is working under the direction of one who really is a master craftsman, and not merely a master *of* craftsmen.

But even so, if such a happy state of things occasionally survives, the exigencies of business will probably result at times in unsuitable work being given to the neophyte, more, perhaps, because his master cannot at the moment

spare the time to think out and arrange for what ought to come next, than from any deliberate desire to combine the education of his pupil with immediate profit to himself.

The growth of commercialism, moreover, has robbed us of much of our due inheritance in these matters, and in many crafts it has certainly undermined, if it has not absolutely swept away, the whole fabric of apprenticeship. However, it has given us fresh opportunities in exchange, and has imposed new conditions. If it has made it difficult for a youth to obtain a thorough all-round training in a manufacturer's workshop, it has at least done something towards removing the barriers which formerly preserved the mysteries of each craft as impenetrable secrets, only to be revealed to those who were bound by indentures to serve through a long term of years at merely nominal wages.

The art student of to-day who turns his attention to jewellery, enamelling or silversmithing, will not easily realise or believe how all but impossible it was for his predecessor of a generation or so ago to obtain anything like a fair insight into even the rudiments of these crafts. When technical institutes were unknown, and when even the most progressive schools of art included no provision for teaching or practising handicrafts, the difficulty of even so much as finding out what tools and appliances were necessary, or where they could be bought, presented an almost insuperable barrier. But all that is changed now, and the passing of the system of apprenticeship, however greatly it is to be regretted, has, at least, made it a good deal easier for outsiders to learn the practice of the crafts.

This is not the place to discuss the relative merits of the old system of apprenticeship and of that new one which is gradually taking its place ; where the employer is under no obligation to teach any more than it suits his interests to teach ; where the learner is free to leave one employer for another as frequently as he may be tempted to do so ; and where the serious student must rely on technical schools and on books, for education in all branches of his craft, except those which are accessible from that narrow path

along which commercialism would like to compel him to walk—in blinkers—all the days of his life.

Accepting facts as they are, we must recognise (i.) that it is only by chance here and there that a good all-round training may still occasionally be obtainable in a manufacturer's workshop; (ii.) that technical schools exist or are growing up in order to bring such training in the crafts easily within the reach, not only of those who are already engaged in these crafts, but also of any who may desire to learn, and that they offer us the best chance we have of rescuing from oblivion those traditional methods and processes for which modern commercial conditions find no place; (iii.) that the supply of new facilities for learning has created a new demand for instruction in handicrafts on the part of highly-educated students of the arts who, a generation ago, would either have confined their attention to painting, sculpture, or architecture, or else would have adopted some entirely different career, perhaps practising their favourite craft in a limited way, just as a hobby; (iv.) that, the all-round training which technical schools provide having been unhappily divorced from the reality and variety of the everyday work of a manufacturer's shop, a more complete and systematic curriculum is needed.



## CHAPTER LVII

### A BASIS FOR CRAFT TRAINING



THIS book embodies an attempt to formulate a system of training which has been gradually worked out in the hope that it may meet the need just indicated in the last chapter, in so far as simple jewellery work is concerned, and many of the preceding chapters have been devoted to explaining some ideas for a series of exercises,

such as, it is believed, are well adapted to that purpose.

These exercises have been based upon the guiding principle that design and construction should always be studied in close mutual association, so that they may constantly act and re-act upon each other through the intelligence of the worker, according to their natural tendencies, after which we are reasonably entitled to hope that results will ensue in which may be found clear evidence of good, sound, rational craftsmanship, and of an instinctive feeling for beauty.

For it is most surely no exaggeration to say that it is an absolutely necessary condition of good craftsmanship that there should always be a thoroughly harmonious understanding between those two partners in the creation of works of art—design and construction—and so, while the exercises which have been suggested are all of them intended to provide good facilities for acquiring skill in dealing with the essential technical processes, it is hoped that they will also give any beginner who follows them an interesting, and perhaps even a stimulating introduction

to some of the many opportunities which jewellery work in particular so freely offers to the play of the artistic and inventive faculties of any one who practises that craft.

It seems worth while laying all this emphasis on the theory of the close mutual dependence of design and construction, each upon the other, before going on to the study of selected examples, so that we may have a clear idea in our minds as to the point of view from which it will be most helpful and instructive to examine the work of other craftsmen, or that of other times and other countries, when we have the chance of doing so.

Without some such standard of judgment in our minds we shall be apt rather often to find ourselves unable to explain why it is that we like or dislike any particular example which comes before us; whereas, if we test our likes and dislikes by the criterion of a discoverable harmony between design and construction, and of a construction evidently inspired not only by a love, but also by a full understanding of the particular material which is being used, we shall be on safe ground, and in all probability we shall notice that if we cannot trace the existence of any such harmony nor see evidences of that love and understanding, then our sense of admiration will not be touched.

Let us therefore insist that a method of craft training should always be based on a study of the material to be used from two points of view—the scientific and the artistic. These two points of view are named here in that order, because all our experience in the early chapters of this book goes to show that the artistic treatment of our material invariably and necessarily *follows* an intelligent appreciation of its distinctive qualities as a natural consequence, and that an artistic treatment is not likely to be possible until after that appreciation and knowledge have been acquired and assimilated. In other words, a study of the material from the scientific point of view should come *before*, and should itself suggest afterwards the right lines on which to pursue a study of the same material from the artistic point of view. Then indeed we shall be sure always

to have in mind the vital, though perhaps rather elementary scientific facts concerning our material, facts which we have now seen to be necessary to us before we can fully understand or appreciate the artistic capabilities of that material. Not that there is anything in the least degree alarming about the study recommended because, although it *is* so important, it really involves nothing more than learning a few very small scraps of science. The four characteristic physical properties of silver which were treated of in Chapters I. to IV. inclusive provide nearly all that we need to know from the scientific point of view for a long time. It only means that we must be decent workmen *first* if we are to have a proper chance of gradually developing into good artists as time goes on.

In order to obtain satisfactory results, science and art *must* constantly be acting and re-acting on each other. The observation of some scientific fact relating to his material, as we saw, for example, in Chapter I., reveals to the craftsman a suggestion of design, and in pursuing this idea of design, in whatever direction it may lead him, right along to its logical conclusion, processes of manipulation are developed and perhaps even invented, processes which will lead in all probability to the acquisition or understanding of other useful bits of knowledge. These bits of knowledge might very well have remained hidden and unsuspected if it had not been for the reciprocally illuminating power which science and art have each for the other, so long as the conditions are favourable. All scraps of knowledge discovered or properly understood as a result of this reciprocal action are sure to be full of artistic possibilities, always ready to remind us of the great truth that the inherent qualities of materials constitute one of the most precious possessions of the artist. It is through them that we are enabled to approach, and to derive inspiration from sources of design which can never be exhausted.

It is probably just at the moment when an interesting process in craft-work is first acquired, or perhaps when its causes and action are first really understood, that the mental

seed is sown from which in due season countless ideas of design may grow, and that is why it is so important for the student of jewellery to *begin* by acquiring a knowledge of the principal characteristics of the precious metals, and the way in which these characteristics have been turned to account at different times. It is by such study that the mind will be prepared most efficiently, so that whenever good opportunities come, it may always be ready to receive and to fertilise those seeds of ideas which are caught by an alert perception, perhaps even subconsciously, while the learner is busily occupied in mastering the various handicraft processes. There is another point of view also to which it may be worth while giving a few moments' thought in connection with this more or less accidental picking up of crumbs of knowledge.

It is possible that a difficulty or even a failure which is met with during some technical process may itself be the means of opening the craftsman's eyes to some useful fact or opportunity which he has never before appreciated.

Let us suppose, for example, that during some unsuccessful attempts to acquire the art of silver soldering a beginner happens to observe that instead of spreading along the joint and so uniting the separate parts together, his solder sometimes has a tendency to gather itself up into an almost perfectly formed spherical grain.

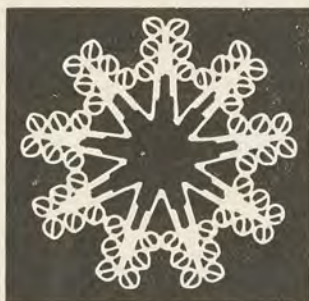
Let us furthermore suppose that until that moment our beginner had been ignorant that small fragments of certain metals would always behave in that way when melted under conditions favourable to that phenomenon.

How happy and thankful he might then feel at having so repeatedly failed to induce his solder to run in the way he wished it to do, until at last he was given the wit to observe that what it *was* doing was to reveal to him a wonderful and valuable characteristic to which he had previously been blind.

May it not even be true that *no* process *can* ever go wrong without, in doing so, demonstrating some fact or quality which is capable of being turned to good account under different conditions?

## CHAPTER LVIII

### WHERE TO LOOK FOR GUIDANCE



IN most of the earlier chapters, in which the characteristic qualities and the processes of working the precious metals were considered and explored, little or nothing was said about the importance of studying the work of master jewellers of our own or of other times whenever that is possible. But that was

not from any lack of appreciation of the importance and usefulness of such study.

It resulted rather from a feeling that there are certain dangers likely to be encountered in the course of such a study if it be undertaken by a beginner without due warning or guidance.

On the other hand, there was also a feeling that any adequate treatment of the subject of how to avoid these dangers, or (to put it in the positive form) any advice on *how* to study—and, most difficult of all perhaps, on how to *recognise*—fine work, would be too great a digression if it came in the midst of the earlier chapters.

The aim of those chapters was to follow up in a logical and constructive way the simultaneous growth of technical ability and of an understanding as to how one may best *begin* to learn the first elementary principles of designing.

Possibly, too, there may have been a third thought somewhere in the background, which may have suggested that any one who was sympathetically interested in the manner and method of approaching craftsmanship and design which

it has been the main purpose of this book to encourage, if he happened to have any good opportunities for such study, would be likely to examine any examples which he saw in the light of his own experience, by doing which he would probably avoid any dangers there might be. And further, that if he was not sympathetically interested in the earlier part of the book, and if he did *not* bring his own experience to bear on his examination of other work, then no amount of warning or guidance would be likely to avail.

Well, after all, what *are* all these dangers ?

Let us try and answer that question by suggestion rather than by a direct statement or by an enumeration of the dangers which have to be avoided.

If we agree that as part of a craftsman's training it is desirable for him to study any examples of good work that are accessible, then from that point of view we shall probably find that certain kinds of jewellery are richer in suggestion than others. And in order to separate those examples which best illustrate the various characteristic treatments which have been described, it would seem well first of all to mention briefly those other types of work which, however interesting they may be in some ways, are not likely to be especially helpful to beginners, who are on the look-out for suggestions, such as those indicated in Chapter LXIII.

In this way, by means of a process of elimination rather than by attempting an exhaustive description, perhaps it will be easier to indicate that type of work which *is* recommended to the particular notice of the student, and there will also be provided an opportunity of giving reasons for not dealing at greater length with other types, in which must be classed many of the most celebrated productions of the great jewellers of various times.

To proceed, then, with the process of elimination, let us begin by a very brief consideration of the jewellery of ordinary commerce.

Naturally, such an expression as that does not touch those masterpieces of modern skill which begin by demanding total exemption from any kind of limitation in their use of

labour and material as a first necessary condition of their existence.

So far as ornaments of this description are concerned, the unit jeweller had much better make up his mind at once not to aspire to such magnificence, and just humbly pass by on the other side. Otherwise he might grow dissatisfied with the simplicity of his ambitions. It would be a pity to develop a craving for conditions which, even if he got them, might diminish instead of increasing his contentment.

No, when speaking of the jewellery of ordinary commerce, the intention is to suggest the things we see everywhere in those shop windows which invite the attention of ordinary people of moderate means.

What is the matter with these things?

Sometimes a few of them are very well. Let us admit that freely. But the greater number of the things exhibited are generally trivial and uninteresting in design, and they are nearly always hard, mechanical and lifeless in execution, while many of them appear to make no perceptible effort at being beautiful.

Not that the workmanship is wanting in skill. On the contrary, it is often most amazingly clever, and almost always reaches a high standard of efficiency. But it fails to give us the pleasure which it ought to do, because its ways are not those which bring out and accentuate the special and individual beauties characteristic of the precious metals, and because its methods of using precious stones are only too frequently vulgar and aggressive. As a rule there is nothing to suggest that this kind of jewellery is the work of human fingers rather than that of some diabolically clever machine, and as a matter of fact a great deal of it is almost entirely machine made. But there is an abundance of very accomplished craftsmanship available in trade workshops, if only it were given a chance; if only the great buying public could be got to see that a thing of beauty is a more desirable possession than something whose main purpose seems to be to proclaim either its expensiveness, or

else its astonishing cleverness. That a profusion of showy stones does not make a rubbishy and unimaginative design into a thing of beauty. That clever workmanship is utterly lost and wasted when it is made to imitate the work of a machine, and that the precious metals *look* precious when they are used daintily, rather than when the chief object appears to be to suggest that a considerable weight of bullion has been used.

These strictures, however, must be most freely qualified by the admission that nowadays there are notable exceptions. Admirable efforts at better things have been and are being made, and quite beautiful pieces of jewellery may be found which have been produced under ordinary commercial conditions. But the stubborn facts remain that ordinary commercial conditions are not favourable to the growth of artistic work, and that most of the ordinary commercial jewellery we see is a deplorable evidence of the essential ugliness and vulgarity of our times.



## CHAPTER LIX

### PICTORIAL AND SCULPTURESQUE JEWELLERY



LET us now consider for a little an entirely different type of jewellery—that which is treated in a pictorial or a sculptresque way—a type of work which consequently can only be well done by a craftsman who is not only a good jeweller, but a fairly accomplished modeller or painter also. Figs. 116 to 121 give some examples of this type of work, and obviously it is not from such advanced craftsmanship as they contain that the most helpful suggestions of methods and treatments suitable for beginners are to be derived.

The gold pendant shown in Fig. 116 is a rich, sumptuous piece of design, very perfectly executed, but if the original be compared with the photograph, one is inclined to feel that the enamelling of the figures does not really add to their value. It is interesting to note that the artist has used the enamel with a considerable degree of reticence, allowing the gold to show through in many places; but even so, the design gains by being seen in black and white, and the colours of the precious stones would have appeared richer had there been less competition with them on the part of the surrounding enamels.

In Fig. 117 the enamel is used with admirable effect, solely for the background, which seems to represent the forest in which St. George has encountered the dragon, and it adds much beauty and mystery to the design. The frame also is full of beauty and invention. It has a row of little pieces of pink coral which, with the three projecting bosses of malachite, completes a pleasant arrangement of colour. The settings which carry the malachite are cunningly devised so as to keep in its place the cord by which the badge was



FIG. 116.—Gold pendant, enamelled and set with precious stones.  
Italian. Sixteenth century. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)

suspended from the neck of the wearer, this cord having evidently been passed through the space beneath these settings, in a groove which surrounds the frame.

The lower part of Fig. 118 is rather dainty and pleasant, and it has been nicely executed, but the upper portion seems to have been added by another and less accomplished hand, and it is out of keeping with the rest.

It is astonishing how often the work of jewellers of the late Renaissance makes but little appeal to the craftsman,



FIG. 117.—Silver badge, parcel gilt, with enamelled background, and a border set with pink coral and green malachite. German. 1528. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)

and fails to be satisfactory as a whole. We are apt to feel that the designer's interest was too much centred in the figure, and that he was rather short of ideas when he came to work at the details of enrichment and construction.

The frame of scrolls or foliage which surrounds or supports the figures is so often commonplace and uninteresting. Instead of being essentially derived from the special qualities which belong to the precious metals, it is much more fre-

quently a mere imitation of carved woodwork, or of architectural stonework, or an uninspired direct rendering of natural forms—so put together that the whole thing either lacks cohesion and unity, or else looks as if it had been cast in one piece, instead of having been built up in true jeweller's fashion out of many parts, each one separately constructed out of sheet or wire, or tiny grains of metal. Very probably this may have been due, in part at least, to the designs having been prepared by men who were not themselves sufficiently familiar with the details and suggestiveness of the jeweller's craft, although they may have been painters or sculptors of ability and originality.

Figs. 119, 120, 121, for example, make one inclined to fancy that their designs may have had that kind of origin. The settings of the stones, especially in Fig. 121, are rather interesting.

Even if one is already well qualified to deal with figure subjects in design, he will do well to postpone their introduction into jewellery until by work at the bench combined with study he has arrived at an adequate understanding and appreciation of the exquisite materials in which it is his privilege to work.

There is still another type of jewellery which must not be forgotten or overlooked, but which is not particularly helpful in suggesting suitable exercises and treatments for beginners—the kind of work, that is, which exists mainly



FIG. 118.—Gold pendant, enamelled and set with precious stones. French. Seventeenth century. (British Museum.)



FIG. 119.—Gold pendant, enamelled and set with crystals and pearls. Spanish, Seventeenth century. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)



FIG. 120.—Gold pendant, enamelled and set with crystals and pearls. Spanish, Seventeenth century. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)

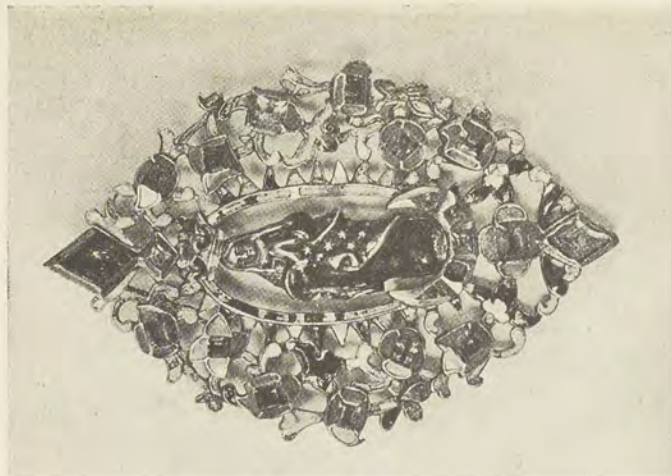


FIG. 121.—Gold pendant, enamelled and set with emeralds. Spanish, Sixteenth century. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)

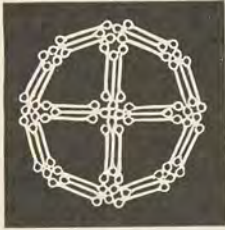
in order to provide an unobtrusive setting for a precious stone or enamel of some very exceptional and rare beauty—where the jeweller deliberately effaces himself and reduces the setting to a minimum.

In such cases the design and workmanship, even if in themselves quite perfect and full of subtlety and daintiness, do not lend themselves to illustration for the present purpose. Jewellery of this type must be handled, or one might rather say “fingered,” and examined closely, before its own special charms can be appreciated at their full worth, for the sense of touch is capable of receiving a keen æsthetic pleasure from the subtle modelling, delicate proportions and perfect finish of things, which at the first glance may seem to be merely nice, simple pieces of good workmanship. However, this subtlety and delicacy and this perfection of finish are attainments not likely to be achieved without a long previous training, through all the many processes from which the master craftsman will, perhaps, have selected only two or three for the production of such an object as these words attempt to indicate. In order to select the right processes all must be intimately known. Our immediate quest must be for those which offer the most valuable training as first steps for beginners, and we have not yet arrived at a definition of the kind of jewellery which will be likely to lead us to the discovery of what these are and of what can be done with them.



## CHAPTER LX

### CRAFTSMANSHIP THE ESSENTIAL THING



HAVING now rejected several types as unsuitable for our purpose, it is time to consider what remains.

There is still that kind of jewellery in which craftsmanship, in the fullest sense of the word, is everything; for if it is liberally interpreted the word must imply and include design, from which, indeed, true craftsmanship cannot be entirely separated. Let us, therefore, look for examples of jewellery whose beauty lies in the skilful and appropriate use of forms which, whether they be simple or elaborate, have arisen directly out of an intelligent and characteristic handling of the precious metals, and are all united and held together by workmanship that expresses a well-considered, well-constructed, and well-balanced design. There may also be precious or semi-precious stones or enamel, or there may be fanciful enrichments in *repoussé*, casting, piercing, engraving, carving, damascening, or niello, or even, perhaps, in some cases, all of these together, but where craftsmanship is supreme, the object may be lovely and interesting without any one of these additions.

Such jewellery it is within the power of any ordinary person to make, if only he cares enough about it, and there is no real need for it to be costly. This type was produced in great perfection by the ancient Grecian, Roman, Byzantine, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic goldsmiths, and there are many beautiful examples, both in the British and the Victoria and Albert Museums, of some of which illustrations appear in this book through the courtesy of their custodians. Many of

these objects formed part of the splendid collections made by Sir A. W. Franks and Signor Castellani, and to the memory of these enthusiasts we owe a large debt of gratitude.

Most of the small pendants in Fig. 122 contain a little simple *repoussé* work, but otherwise they are entirely built up out of golden wires and grains and pieces of plate,



FIG. 122.—Gold ornaments. Ancient Greek and Roman. Second century B.C. to second century A.D. (British Museum.)

twisted and beaded and coiled and clustered and soldered together, with the happiest results and a sense of perfect completeness.

The large gold brooch in Fig. 123 owes some of its beauty to its filling of enamel, and to the subtle way in which the various parts of the design are made to give relief and contrast to each other. The proportions are not very

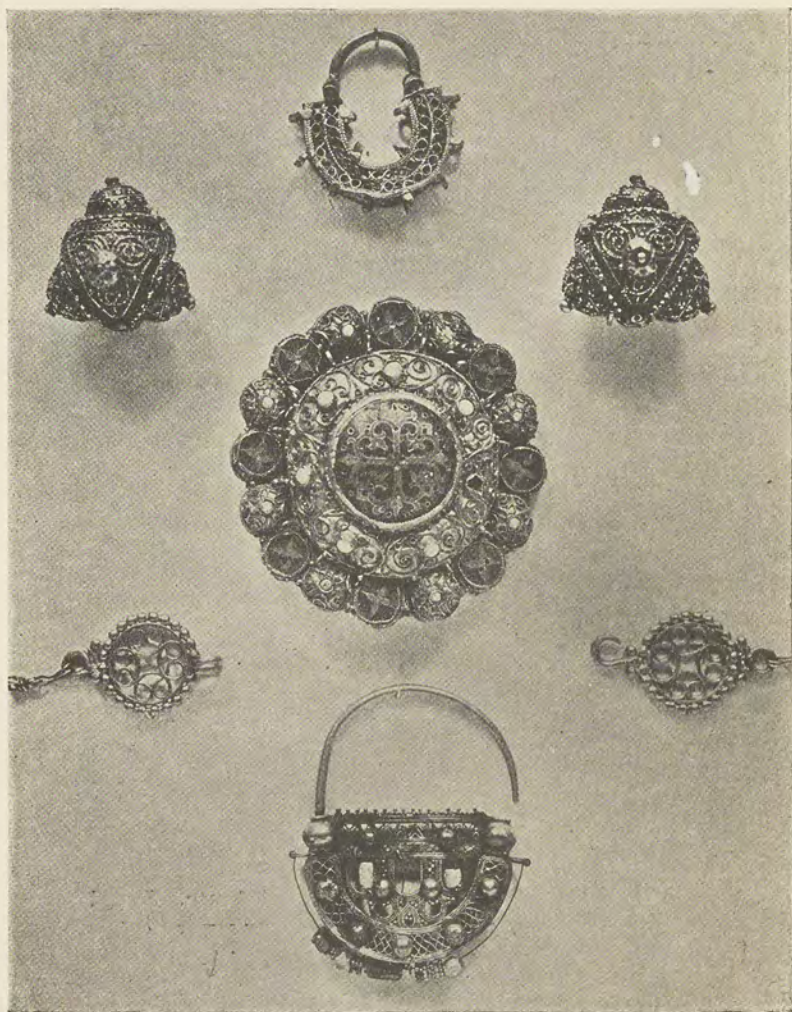


FIG. 123.—Gold earring. Byzantine. Seventh century. Pair of gold knobs, with granulated ornament. Date and origin unknown. Gold brooch, with *cloisonné* enamels. Probably tenth or eleventh century. Two ends of gold necklace. Sardinian. Gold earring. Byzantine. (British Museum.)

intricate, and all the main outlines are circular, but the alternation of the smooth surfaces of rich and varied but quiet colour with the somewhat complex ornaments of encrusted filigree work set with pearls provides a full measure of interest, and the cruciform design of the centre part is pleasantly echoed by the disposition of the enamelled discs in the outer band. The two earrings above and below it respectively, no doubt derived much richness from the row of coloured beads and pearls which once surrounded their outer curves, but apart from what little now remains of these accessories, the lower earring especially is a most



FIG. 124.—Silver-gilt clasp, set with turquoise. Anatolian. Nineteenth century. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)

lovely object, composed as it is entirely of very simple forms, produced by quite elementary processes. The brilliant effect of light and shade in this earring is one of its most attractive features, and the contrast of the reflecting surfaces of its bosses with the deep specks of dark shadow behind the network border produces a most happy effect. This is helped by the firm and decided lines of the main framework, whose severity is so admirably relieved by the daintily fine twists which compose it, and the cresting of grain clusters along its top. Other similar clusters enrich the middle part, but some of them seem to have got broken away. No one seems to know how the two triangular golden

knobs in the same illustration were used—perhaps they may have hung at the ends of a girdle—but they look like a craftsman's designs, though perhaps the photograph scarcely succeeds in making their bulbous form clear.

There is something peculiarly satisfactory about what

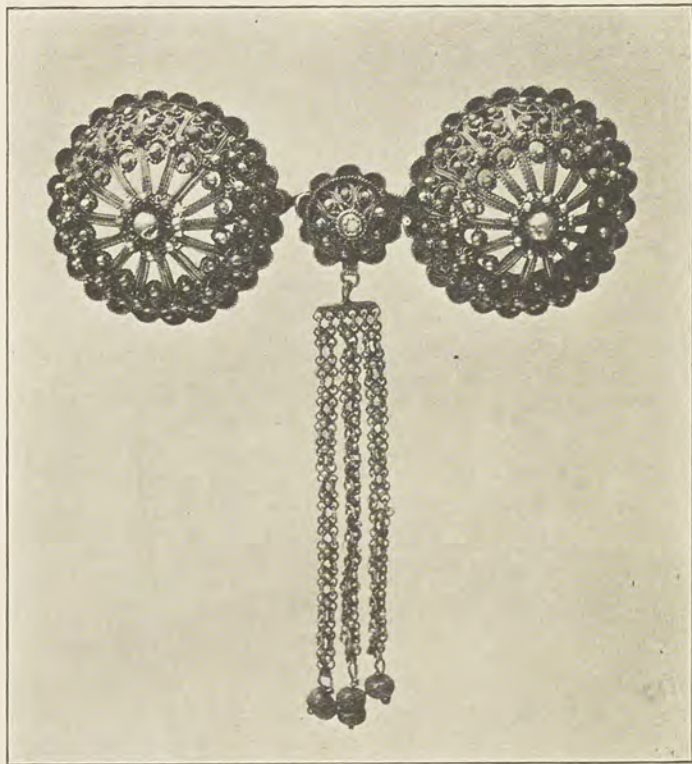


FIG. 125.—Silver clasp. Turkish. Eighteenth century. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)

remains of the small Anatolian clasp illustrated in Fig. 124. Any one who examines it at all closely will probably agree that here is a piece of unmistakable craftsmanship, conceived and carried out by the same man. It looks at first sight as if it represented an intricate design of grapes, or some other cluster-fruited plant, and yet, when it is analysed, it proves to be only a filling of spaces with coils of filigree

work, and a subsequent laying on, here and there, of clusters of round grains in two sizes and arrangements, with small,



FIG. 126.—Rosary of ebony and ivory beads, with bosses and cross of silver. Austrian Tyrol. Twentieth century.

plain flat discs amongst them, put just where they seemed to be wanted, in the freest way, but with excellent judgment. How entirely right is the absolute simplicity of the forms

which so rigidly enclose and confine these fanciful pieces of decoration !

The handsome Turkish clasp (Fig. 125) is also satisfactory in quite a different way, though it is equally characteristic as a specimen of an effective design, arising directly out of

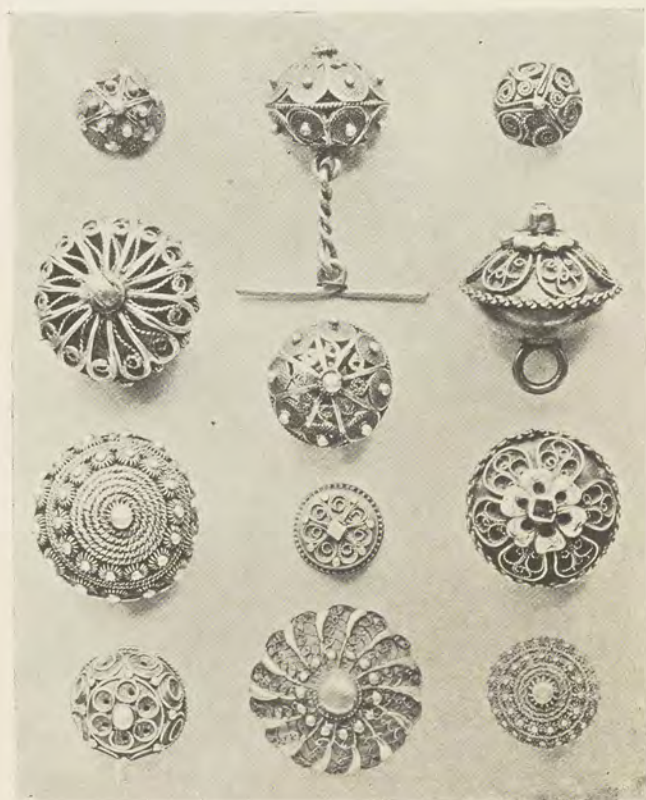


FIG. 127.—Silver buttons from Norway, Spain, and other countries.

craftsmanship, through intimate understanding of the material ; but here similar elementary parts are associated symmetrically in order to compose a very definite geometric design.

Quite similar, again, are the silver bosses of the rosary (Fig. 126) and the tiny, but very pretty beads, used to

separate its larger ones, which latter, by the way, are beautifully constructed of ebony and ivory in alternate segments. The cross itself is a good piece of filigree work, treated with reserve and distinction, pleasant in design, and well knit together, and free from any tendency to the sprawliness which is so often the besetting sin of the filigree worker. It is an excellent rendering of a traditional idea, on sound lines of design and workmanship, by a contemporary craftsman.

In Fig. 127 there are various patterns of silver buttons from four or five different countries, most of which have features in common, and each one of which is a thoroughly characteristic and charming little example of craftsmanship in simple jewellery. In three instances a pair of buttons of the same pattern will be seen illustrated in two different positions, one above the other, in order that their form and construction may be understood. A comparison of those which are composed of repeated twists and coils will show how greatly the effect is improved in these, when a few straight lines are introduced at regular intervals, so as to counteract the monotonous effect of the otherwise too insistent curves.

The last six illustrations exemplify a considerable variety of treatments, in all of which craftsmanship is the essential thing, and they may serve to indicate the type of jewellery to which the beginner is recommended to devote his closest attention, especially during the early part of his training. Many other illustrations of jewellery work have been kept back for inclusion in subsequent chapters, although they might very well have been cited as typical examples of designs whose origin was clearly traceable to craftsmanship, and as such they will no doubt be recognised when examined.

They were needed in order to demonstrate certain particular characteristics of design or of construction, for the exemplification of which they happened to be especially suitable.

## CHAPTER LXI

### PEASANT JEWELLERY: ITS CHARMS AND ITS FAILINGS



ANOTHER characteristic bit of filigree work, enriched, in this case, by twisted wire and a surrounding border of very simple *repoussé* work, engraved and pierced, occurs in the smaller of the two clasps in Fig. 128. The larger one just above it also displays the richness of twisted wire, especially when fine twists are used to emphasise the bolder ones, but the filling of the large heart-shaped spaces is not successful. That kind of filling must either be closer and more compact, so that the forms used are not individually noticeable, or else these must be beautiful in themselves and in the combinations they make when repeated. In this case they are coarse and too large for the spaces they are intended to decorate, so that there is not enough room to repeat them in numbers sufficient to obtain a rhythmic pattern, and where they do not fill the spaces, the methods adopted to avoid gaps are clumsy and show a want of invention and resourcefulness.

When searching for a title or phrase wherewith to label jewellery of that type—so important to students of the craft—illustrated in the last chapter, it was natural to think of “peasant jewellery” as a convenient expression. For peasant jewellery is nearly always distinguished by just those very characteristics enumerated on p. 314, and several of the objects in those illustrations to whose salient features attention has been drawn, *e.g.*, Figs. 125 and 127, would be rightly so described.

But a little thought shows that this title would be quite too limited for the present purpose, since it would exclude not only historic examples which, in their day, have doubt-

less been among the most cherished possessions of kings and queens, of popes and archbishops, but those other numerous ornaments, which, although they may be of somewhat less importance, were yet, in all probability, never intended for the decoration of peasants.

At the same time it is quite worth while to consider why peasant jewellery is generally so pleasant and interesting to look at and to handle—not always, of course, but much more often than not—and to consider, moreover, why it is

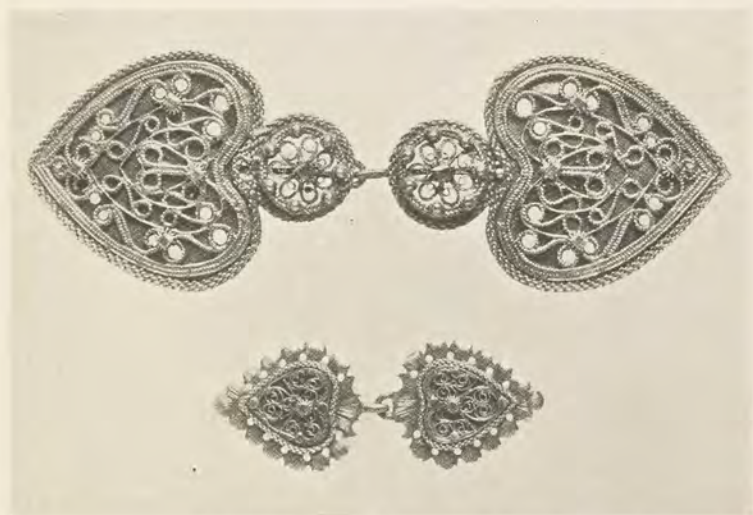


FIG. 128.—Silver clasps. Norwegian.

frequently so much more satisfactory than the ambitious pieces designed for the adornment of great ladies. The reason seems to be that the craftsman whose vocation has required him to design and make jewellery for the use of peasants, in restricting himself so as to keep within reasonable bounds in the matter of expense, has had to find beauty and interest, and richness of effect, rather in making the very most of the simpler and less costly of his materials, than in a lavish display of rare and valuable stones and of much gold and enamels.

The tradition has been handed down to him by his teachers

and forerunners that certain pleasant ornamental effects are easily produced by quite elementary processes, familiar to every jeweller—effects to which the precious metals naturally lend themselves, and that when these are suitably used and contrasted one against another they will make pretty ornaments, even without the added charm of precious stones or enamels, or even of representations of natural forms.

Some of the traditional methods of using these elementary processes have been seen to give effects of great richness and interest. But peasant jewellery, though so often delightful and charming, is also frequently very disappointing. The peasant jeweller has followed a well-established traditional method, both of design and workmanship—the collective experience of generations of craftsmen behind him. Now that is a fine thing to use as a ladder, but it is dangerous to allow it to assume the likeness of a carriage, in which to jog along over an easy well-worn road, with the minimum of personal effort. He has been too apt to use methods just as they were handed down to him, without realising at all how they were evolved; without seeing how to carry them further, and thereby to make his material surrender some of its secrets to him also; without, in fact, attempting to enrich and enlarge the tradition by his own experience before passing it on to the next generation, but merely leaving it behind him rather the worse for wear. He has just selected a few ornamental treatments, used them blindly and worn them threadbare.

Such work as bears this kind of evidence on its face often gives us an unpleasant sense, not only of monotony, but also of waste—waste of energy, of time, of patience, of precious material—in repeating endlessly the same few little tricks, trying to make an over-lavish use of two or three pretty details of workmanship supply the place of variety and contrast and invention. But these defects are by no means peculiar to peasant jewellery. The same kind of thing is quite equally apparent in much very ambitious work.

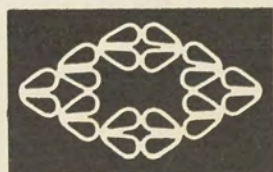
There is a form of necklace which was evidently a favourite with the ancient Greek and Etruscan goldsmiths, and many people consider it very beautiful. The distinguishing feature is a whole long row, or even sometimes two or more rows, of small vase-shaped drops, each one laboriously made exactly like its neighbours. The forms may be individually charming, but when used by the score or even by the hundred the whole thing inevitably suggests that it was designed by some one who had no proper respect for the shortness of human life and no understanding of the deadening and deteriorating effect of endless repetition.

A lavish expenditure of human labour on a work of art, where the effect of the individual contributions of numbers of craftsmen is lost in the immensity of the whole, is right and proper where the whole really is immense, in size, in grandeur of conception, in importance in the widest sense of the word, as, for example, in a great cathedral.

A small piece of dainty craftsmanship, however, should surely be rich in effect, without exciting thoughts of compassion for the monotonous toil involved in making it what it is.

Inexhaustible patience? Yes, certainly, as much as you will, so long as the conception is genuinely worth it; but the feeling aroused in the mind of one who examines the object should be envious delight at the pleasure expressed in masterly craftsmanship, rather than pity for the poor human machine condemned to endless repetition of a trivial idea.





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